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LETTERS

ON

The Events

WHICH HAVE PASSED IN FRANCE

SINCE

THE RESTORATION IN 1815.

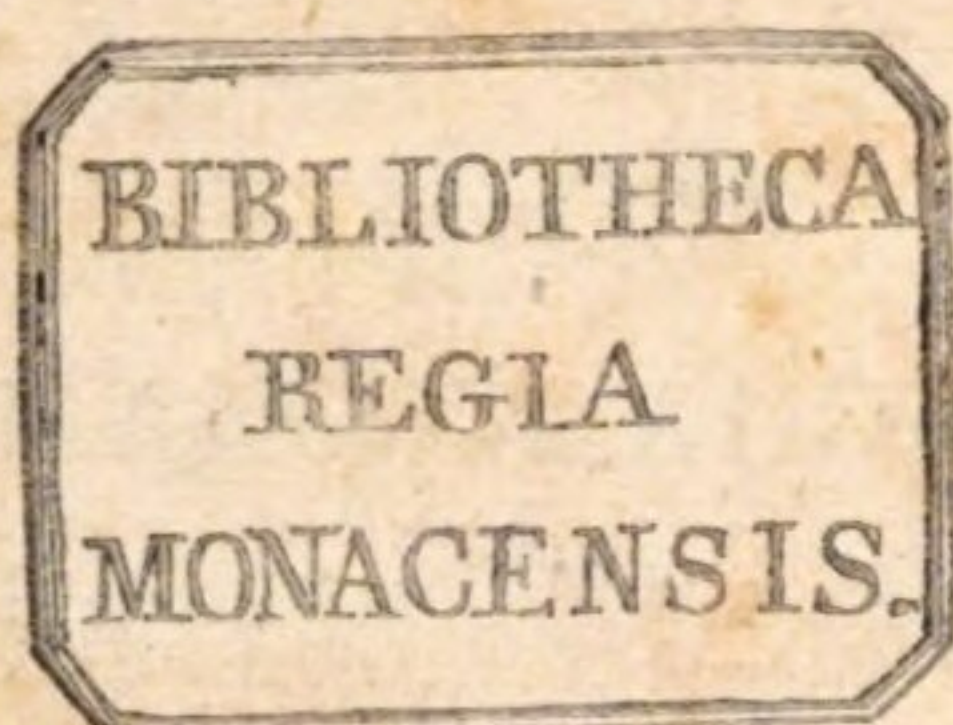
BY

HELEN MARIA WILLIAMS.

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CONTENTS.

Letter	Page
I. General Reflections	1
II. Persecution of the Protestants	15
III. Same Subject continued	28
IV. Same Subject continued	39
V. Same Subject continued	52
VI. Chamber of Deputies	61
VII. Law of Elections	75
VIII. Liberty of the Press	85
IX. Concordat	94
X. Mandement—Literature—Science	105
XI. Bible Society—Missionaries—Education ..	112
XII. Recruiting Law	123
XIII. Catholic Processions	138
XIV. Aix-la-Chapelle	150
XV. Proposition to change the Law of Elections..	157
XVI. The same Subject continued—Conclusion ..	174

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTER.

Defence of the French Protestants	184
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CONTENTS

I. General Introduction	1
II. The History of the Church	10
III. The Doctrine of the Church	20
IV. The Sacraments of the Church	30
V. The Ministry of the Church	40
VI. The Law of the Church	50
VII. The Liturgy of the Church	60
VIII. The Discipline of the Church	70
IX. The Canon Law	80
X. The Church and the State	90
XI. The Church and the World	100
XII. The Church and the Future	110
XIII. The Church and the Present	120
XIV. The Church and the Past	130
XV. The Church and the Future	140
XVI. The Church and the Present	150
XVII. The Church and the Past	160
XVIII. The Church and the Future	170
XIX. The Church and the Present	180
XX. The Church and the Past	190
XXI. The Church and the Future	200
XXII. The Church and the Present	210
XXIII. The Church and the Past	220
XXIV. The Church and the Future	230
XXV. The Church and the Present	240
XXVI. The Church and the Past	250
XXVII. The Church and the Future	260
XXVIII. The Church and the Present	270
XXIX. The Church and the Past	280
XXX. The Church and the Future	290
XXXI. The Church and the Present	300
XXXII. The Church and the Past	310
XXXIII. The Church and the Future	320
XXXIV. The Church and the Present	330
XXXV. The Church and the Past	340
XXXVI. The Church and the Future	350
XXXVII. The Church and the Present	360
XXXVIII. The Church and the Past	370
XXXIX. The Church and the Future	380
XL. The Church and the Present	390
XLI. The Church and the Past	400
XLII. The Church and the Future	410
XLIII. The Church and the Present	420
XLIV. The Church and the Past	430
XLV. The Church and the Future	440
XLVI. The Church and the Present	450
XLVII. The Church and the Past	460
XLVIII. The Church and the Future	470
XLIX. The Church and the Present	480
L. The Church and the Past	490
LXI. The Church and the Future	500
LXII. The Church and the Present	510
LXIII. The Church and the Past	520
LXIV. The Church and the Future	530
LXV. The Church and the Present	540
LXVI. The Church and the Past	550
LXVII. The Church and the Future	560
LXVIII. The Church and the Present	570
LXIX. The Church and the Past	580
LXX. The Church and the Future	590
LXXI. The Church and the Present	600
LXXII. The Church and the Past	610
LXXIII. The Church and the Future	620
LXXIV. The Church and the Present	630
LXXV. The Church and the Past	640
LXXVI. The Church and the Future	650
LXXVII. The Church and the Present	660
LXXVIII. The Church and the Past	670
LXXIX. The Church and the Future	680
LXXX. The Church and the Present	690
LXXXI. The Church and the Past	700
LXXXII. The Church and the Future	710
LXXXIII. The Church and the Present	720
LXXXIV. The Church and the Past	730
LXXXV. The Church and the Future	740
LXXXVI. The Church and the Present	750
LXXXVII. The Church and the Past	760
LXXXVIII. The Church and the Future	770
LXXXIX. The Church and the Present	780
LXXXX. The Church and the Past	790
LXXXXI. The Church and the Future	800
LXXXXII. The Church and the Present	810
LXXXXIII. The Church and the Past	820
LXXXXIV. The Church and the Future	830
LXXXXV. The Church and the Present	840
LXXXXVI. The Church and the Past	850
LXXXXVII. The Church and the Future	860
LXXXXVIII. The Church and the Present	870
LXXXXIX. The Church and the Past	880
LXXXXX. The Church and the Future	890
LXXXXXI. The Church and the Present	900
LXXXXXII. The Church and the Past	910
LXXXXXIII. The Church and the Future	920
LXXXXXIV. The Church and the Present	930
LXXXXXV. The Church and the Past	940
LXXXXXVI. The Church and the Future	950
LXXXXXVII. The Church and the Present	960
LXXXXXVIII. The Church and the Past	970
LXXXXXIX. The Church and the Future	980
LXXXXXX. The Church and the Present	990
LXXXXXXI. The Church and the Past	1000

LETTERS ON FRANCE.

LETTER I.

General Reflections.

MY DEAR SIR,

I DISAVOW your ill-founded conjectures respecting my prolonged silence: the interest I once took in the French Revolution is not chilled, and the enthusiasm I once felt for the cause of liberty still warms my bosom. Were it otherwise I might perhaps make a tolerable defence, at least for a woman, by reverting to the past, and recapitulating a small part only of all I have seen, and all I have suffered. But where the feelings and affections of the mind have been

powerfully called forth by the attraction of some great object, we are not easily cured of long cherished predilection. Those who believed as firmly as myself in the first promises of the revolution, have perhaps sometimes felt, like me, a pang of disappointment; but no doubt continue, like me, to love liberty, "*quand même*,——" to use the famous unfinished phrase of an Ultra, applied to the King—it may have given some cause of complaint.

I am yet to learn, however, what there may be in common with the abhorrence of military despotism expressed in my last letters, and the renunciation of liberal principles. The strange *prestige* for our imperial ruler that prevails in England often renews an accusation which has long since been brought against our country by foreigners, that she considers freedom as an home-production, chartered for her own use, and resigns with great equanimity the government of the rest of Europe to monarchs—" *qui*

montent à cheval;” the French term for a conqueror.

I have been silent only because I have been discouraged, for the interval has been crowded with events. We are not among those happy generations who live in times of which there is nothing to relate, which close upon mankind, and leave no memorial as they pass. Those barren years of history where the reader turns hastily the page, and finds no battle to relieve drowsiness, no dramatic catastrophe to amuse his attention, have perhaps shed over private stations the calm blessedness of domestic security. At what a distance from such tranquillity has the largest portion of my life been passed! I, who have seen all the stupendous events that usually fill the lapse of ages, and resound through the spaces of creation, crowded into my short space, and passing before my eyes, not in vision, like Banquo's line, but interwoven with every thing around me, linked with all my hopes or fears, connected with my very

existence, and fixing irreparably my destiny.

But let me hasten to give you a sketch of our present political situation in this country, after taking a slight retrospect of what has passed since the 8th of July, 1815, when the French monarch under the tutelary shade of the *Panache Blanc*, but preceded, alas! that very morning by the standards of the Prussian Eagle, made his second entry into his capital.

When the acclamations that hailed the return of Louis XVIII had ceased, it was felt that this second restoration differed in many respects from the first. The same foreign armies again occupied France, but their temper was changed. The magnanimity, the generous forbearance that had been recompensed by loud approbation, the sentiment of indignation against the oppressor, which formed one link of common hatred between the conquerors and the conquered, all the reciprocal emotions that had softened the

humiliation of the first capture, had now given place to feelings of another nature. The faith of treaties had been broken, blood had flowed in torrents, the tempest had been horrible, and no rainbow-colour seemed to cheer its darkness. The short accession of Bonaparte had also given rise to new offences, new resentments, and new recriminations.

Unhappily for France, instead of calming this agitation of the public mind, the oligarchic party, the unchanged and incurable adherents of the ancient despotism, seized the reins of government, with all their train of protections, and privileges, their exultation at the present, and their resentment of the past. They believed that the moment was arrived when the revolutionary principles of equal rights, independence, toleration, and whatever else belonged to that order of things, might be crushed for ever. The King almost singly, and in vain, opposed their measures. His enlightened understanding led him to disapprove of what was violent;

and so well was his moderation recognized, that the expression, "*plus royaliste que le Roi*," became proverbial. But the period of that triumph which Louis XVIII has since obtained over the partizans of absolute power, which he had solemnly renounced, was yet distant; the constitutional monarchy and the charter were not yet to be won without a further struggle.

The highest offices of the state were then for the most part filled by men whose ideas had remained stationary, while every thing else had been in convulsion. They fancied that France in 1815 was the same France as that which they had formerly known. They had made no acquaintance with the new race they were called upon to govern. They refused to believe that twenty-five years of revolution had enlightened the French people; ashamed indeed that, when first wearied of slavery, they had not been worthy of freedom, but now comprehending all its value; proud also of unparalleled victories,

and less humbled by defeat, than irritated almost to madness by the presence of conquering armies.

The great majority of the French nation wished indeed for nothing so much as tranquillity. It was weary to excess of Bonaparte; it had too long groaned under the weight of military successes; every new victory had produced some new misery. Repose, fortune, children, every interest and every affection of private life, had been barbarously sacrificed at the altar of his ambition; servility itself was tired of being servile, and the unhappy would bear no more. The nation was disposed to cherish new hopes, but it still felt the pressure of evil, and misery is suspicious. The volume of Bonaparte was closed, but not to open a new register of oppression.

Above all, one class of the nation was found in vigorous resistance to all *ultra*-royalist measures; that class is composed of the whole youth of France. Among them

there is no dissenting voice, no hostile opinion. You may still inquire in French society what are the political sentiments of a man in advanced life; but if the person with whom you converse be young, inquiry is useless: that person is a lover of liberty. The French youth have lived only under the new order of things, and have not been taught to respect the old. They have imbibed the principles of the revolution, without having felt its evils. Its pitiless tempest rocked their cradle, and passed harmless over their heads. They are not like those who, having passed through the revolution, are weary of the conflict, and disposed to leave the reformation of the world to whomever it may concern. The minds of the French youth are unsubdued by suffering, and full of the ardour of independence. They know that liberty is the prize, for many of their parents have bled in the field, or perished on the scaffold. But they are too well read in modern history, of which their

country has been the great theatre, to seek for liberty where it is not to be found. They do not resemble that misled and insensate multitude who, in the first years of the revolution, had just thrown off their chains, and profaned in their ignorance the cause they revered. The present race are better taught, and will not bow the knee to false idols. They rally around the charter as their tutelary divinity, whom it is their duty to obey, and their privilege to defend.

The legislature of 1815 was soon assembled. Every kind of influence had been used in the departments, without stopping to inquire whether legal or no, to elect the adherents only of the ultra-royalist sect. At Nismes, for instance, no protestant dared to appear at the electoral college; for which, indeed, they had very serious reasons, thirteen protestant electors having been massacred in their way thither.

Thus was formed the too famous Chamber of Deputies of 1815. They were called by

courtesy the Representatives of the People, but they were the advocates of another cause. Under their auspices a fatal re-action took place in France, and terror, with a new name, was once more the order of the day. Lists of exception were formed, and the King in vain sought, himself, to ratify the "*oubli et pardon*;" words which cannot be traced without emotion, pronounced by Louis XVI, with the sublime magnanimity of Christian virtue, in the view of the scaffold.

A law was passed for the expulsion from the French territory of those members of the Convention who had voted the death of that unfortunate prince, and had also, upon the return of Bonaparte from Elba, signed what he called his "Additional Act" to his constitution—the second crime being considered as an aggravation of the first. This law eventually gave rise to a cruel kind of injustice. It is well known, that one fatal error of those true friends of liberty, the Gironde, was the belief that, on the trial of Louis XVI,

all they had left to do was to yield in appearance to the terrorists; and several voted his death with the firm purpose of saving him, by joining additional clauses to their votes, such as imprisonment for life, banishment till the peace, &c. Firm and open resistance would, no doubt, have been not only nobler, but wiser; for the surest manner of inspiring awe in those who do wrong, is to do right. It is however a fact, that the votes containing such clauses were couched in favour of the King; and such in particular was the vote of M. Pominier Rabaud, the brother of the illustrious and unfortunate Rabaud St. Etienne, and for several years past one of our protestant ministers at Paris. M. Rabaud, having thought fit to sign the "Additional Act," was sent into exile, while some of the terrorists who had voted the death of the King without modification or delay, not having signed the Additional Act, were suffered to remain. M. Rabaud bears a name which is never pronounced but with

veneration by the protestants of France. His exile was generally deplored; the pious had lost a model, and the poor a friend. After two years of exile, his return was solicited by one of the best defenders of protestanism and of liberty in France, M. Boissy D'Anglas, and granted by the King with generous alacrity. The first time our venerable pastor appeared at church, a great part of the audience offered him a spontaneous tribute of affectionate reverence, by rising when he entered.

At the disastrous period of 1815, arbitrary imprisonments were common, and the ordinary courts of justice were found to be too slow in their decisions. Military commissions were therefore substituted, and which were to have force during two years. This ancient tribunal, called the Prevotal Court, was composed of a military provost and three judges. Monarchical in its forms, but revolutionary in its proceedings; wrapt up in the dusty gloom of ancient times, but passing its irre-

vocable fiat with the rapidity of a Jacobin tribunal; its sentence was without appeal, and execution took place within twenty-four hours.

All that was worst in the system of Bonaparte's administration was maintained; he named every magistrate himself, because he loved every exercise of power, and, above all, to be himself the centre of every thing.* This mode of governing in detail was adopted in 1815. Not only the prefects, but the sub-prefects, were chosen from among the nobles. Even the country mayors were seigneurs, who often remained quietly in their chateaux, and

* Of this he gave proofs in several edicts concerning internal regulations, which he sent from Schönbrun, and a long ordinance about the French theatre from the palace of the Czars. He was probably also proud of these dates; and felt that there was something to fill the imagination in the power of giving orders that had such a space to traverse, and such a certainty of being executed. He liked to show he could govern, from the walls of the Kremlin to the green-room of the Rue-Richelieu.

sent their valets-de-chambre to govern the villages. The departmental administrations were all consequently of the same opinion, that the people were to be brought back to their former condition previous to the Revolution. Vexations were every where practised, and complaint was every where termed sedition.

In some parts of France, this re-action produced the most fatal effects. The heated imaginations of the people of the south were wrought up to a sort of frenzy:—French blood was once more spilt by Frenchmen, and assassinations and massacres took place at Marseilles, Avignon, and Nismes. Nismes! the remembrances connected with the fate of a large portion of the inhabitants of that devoted city interest us too deeply as protestants, not to pause at those events, and devote some pages to the dark story of religious persecution.

LETTER II.

Persecution of the Protestants.

SEVERAL narratives have been published concerning the events which took place at Nismes in 1815. It is not therefore my purpose to enter into those sad details, of which also I sent you a slight sketch at the period when they happened. But how can I return again to that period, and pass over such calamities without notice? That strange and unspeakable horror, of which we had never harboured a thought or an apprehension. We believed that fanaticism, long since driven from every enlightened part of Europe, had now no refuge but on the other side of the Pyrennees, under the auspices of the throne and the inquisition;—but who suspected that it would ever pass that boundary?

The first tidings of these disasters that reached Paris were scarcely believed. They

came to us with dreadful proofs of their certainty, and yet they seemed to be incredible. Murders—repeated, multiplied murders, had been committed upon the unarmed and defenceless inhabitants of a populous city, in the face of the national guard and of the local authorities; and these crimes were perpetrated against protestants, in the immediate presence of the armies of the great protestant powers of Europe.

But when the dismay which petrified the public mind was diminished, it was recognised that this work of death was not unprecedented in that devoted city, and that the massacres of 1815 could be traced as proceeding in a direct line of connexion from the massacres of 1790. The same fanatics grasped the dagger, and the same order of victims felt the stroke. But the assassinations of 1790, which had been followed by twenty-five years of peace between the two communions, were almost forgotten. The events of 1815, however, roused attention, not merely to

those of 1790, but to all the calamities that had preceded this last catastrophe. The protestants again opened the page of French history, and read the long series of their persecutions and wrongs. Let us follow them a moment in the retrospect.—

They saw the dreadful day of St. Bartholomew hailed with acclamations at Rome ; and the Pope, not satisfied with going, followed by all his cardinals, in solemn procession to the church to offer up his thanksgivings for this holy carnage, but ordering a medal to be struck in commemoration of the event, for the instruction of future times. *

* Who can pass by the church of St. Germain de L'Auxerois without shuddering at the sound of that bell that rung the tocsin of the protestants, the signal of general carnage? The answer of an eminent magistrate to an assassin of the Albigeois, who inquired how he should distinguish the protestants, is well known :—" Tuez toujours, Dieu reconnoitra les siens." This answer forms a striking contrast to that of the governor of Paris, who, upon receiving the order of Charles IX to put all the pro-

The edict of Henry IV, giving complete toleration to the protestants, whose cause he had forsaken, but whose services he never forgot, was followed by too short an interval of tranquillity. That best of French monarchs, “the only king,” says Voltaire, “not brought up by priests, and whom the people still remember,” fell the victim of a fanatic monk. Some protestant principles might still lurk at his heart;—he gave little hopes of being ever improved into a persecutor, and he perished.

Amidst the troubles which succeeded his death, the protestants constantly took part with the reigning family. Under the reign of Lewis XIII, I was going to say under that of Richelieu, the prime-minister had other things to do than to occupy himself much with religious dissensions. Louis XIV rendered justice to the efforts of the

testants to death, answered,—“Sire, j’ai transmis vos ordres aux troupes de la garrison; j’ai trouvé des fideles soldats, mais pas un assassin.”

protestants in his cause; and original letters of that monarch exist, in which he expresses his satisfaction at their conduct in the warmest terms. But all their services were forgotten, when Louis XIV, after having encouraged the representation of Moliere's *Tartuffe*, became himself the disciple of monks;* and spread a deeper gloom over the last fading glories of his reign by the revocation of the edict of Nantes. His courtiers had abused the privilege of courtiers to deceive their

* At that period, when great efforts were made to convert the protestants, every art was employed to make a catholic of Mademoiselle de La Force, a descendant of that La Force almost miraculously saved at the massacre of St. Bartholomew. She remained steadfast to her faith, and was confined in a convent from whence she contrived to escape, but was retaken. The king then ordered her to be transferred to the Convent of Les Filles St. Marie, and to be more closely confined. This prison of Mademoiselle de la Force is now one of our two protestant churches at Paris, where religious worship is performed every Sunday. The present representative of that family, the Duke de la Force, is a catholic.

prince. They had persuaded the enfeebled monarch that there would soon be no more protestants in France, that all at Montpellier were proselytes, and that at Montauban they had assembled in the town-house, and solemnly signed their recantation. At that very period multitudes of protestants were expiating their faith chained to the oar, and many of their ministers had been put to death. They fled in such alarming numbers from their ungrateful country, that the evil became sufficiently great to give occasion for a law, by which emigration was punished with the galleys for life. Multitudes were still left to suffer all that persecution could inflict, pursuing them through life, and even in their expiring moments. A protestant, when ill, was obliged to admit a catholic priest, who inquired of him in what religion he died? If he declared that he persisted in the protestant faith, and had the misfortune to recover, he was chained to the oar for life; if he died, his body was dragged upon a sledge, and

thrown into the earth, deprived of funeral rites, and his property was confiscated.

Madame de Maintenon sometimes treats the persecution of the protestants as an affair of finance. In a letter to one of her relations, she advises him to purchase an estate in Languedoc, observing, that on account of the flight of the Huguenots, "*les biens s'y vendront pour rien.*" The cruelty of Charles IX belonged to gothic times; but what a strange confusion of barbarism and civilization, what a mixture of light and darkness, in the persecution that stained the Augustan age of Louis XIV! * The splendid eloquence of Bossuet condemns him to eternal celebrity as the apostle of persecution. Those well-known words in his *oraison funèbre* of the

* Voltaire, in his History of the Age of Louis XIV, dazzled by the splendour of its literature, has perhaps too much extolled that monarch; who ravaged the Palatinate, scattered the industry of France over Europe, and who, with all his patronage of letters, hated La Fontaine, exiled Fenelon, and killed Racine with an angry glance.

Jesuit Le Tellier, the confessor of Madame de Maintenon, are indelible; when he told Louis XIV, speaking of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes “*tout étoit calme dans un si grand mouvement.*” Calm perhaps at the palace of Versailles, but less tranquil in the dwellings of the unhappy protestants. The virtuous, the sublime Flechier, in vain lifted up his voice against that work of desolation. Madame de Maintenon was governed by Le Tellier; and the fanatical Jesuit, Père La Chaise, was the Confessor of Louis XIV. Could Père La Chaise have looked into futurity, he might have seen from his mansion, upon a hill without the walls of Paris, the sloping grounds of his fine park, overlooking the whole capital, now converted into a cemetery, where the protestants, to whom he would have refused a grave, repose with catholics in peace.*

* This cemetery has no parallel in any capital of Europe. Placed in the most picturesque situation, its vast

Louis XV hastened to confirm, to sanction, and even to aggravate, the persecution of the protestants, by the edict of 1724, to which

extent, the magnificent view it commands, its undulating soil covered with verdure, and shaded by trees, and its beautiful monuments, attract the curiosity of strangers, who admire the purity of taste that prevails in these monuments, which are all modern. This inclosure contains no mouldering sepulchres; every tomb bears a recent date, and is filled with contemporary life. But while the traveller carelessly reads the inscription on the storied urn, and passes on, those who, like me, have long inhabited Paris, wander to that spot with far other emotions. These tombs contain the objects of our tenderest and most sacred affections; those with whom we have passed through the storms of life at an epoch when they beat most pitiless; those whom we have folded to the heart in the agonies of separation; who fixed on us that look which is the last communication of the dying, long after the lips have lost their utterance. Nothing can be more affecting than the sight of this cemetery *le jour des morts*. On that day, sacred to the dead, the catholics hasten hither in crowds, and, kneeling at the grave of the departed, pray for the repose of their souls. This tender superstition, that soothes the bitterness of sorrow, is more to be envied than

they continued to be subject till 1787, when the mild edict of Louis XVI unfolded to them the perspective of civil liberty.

But during that interval how many martyrs had the cause of protestantism numbered! when the penalty of assembling for public worship was the galleys for the men, perpetual imprisonment for the women, and death for the preacher. M. Boissy D'Anglas, in a late publication, gives an affecting ac-

deplored. The protestants bring offerings of fresh flowers, selecting perhaps those to which some recollection of the heart have given a predilection. The groves are all carefully planted with shrubs; that spot where my mother reposes is encircled with Scotch firs, that seem to blend the associations of country with the sorrows of affection. At Paris we all know the place of our repose; we have all some grave near which we have chosen our last shelter—we have all said to those who may survive us, “O lay me, ye that see the light, near the rock of my rest!”—How soothing a contrast we find in this sad yet cherished privilege, with those times which I too well remember, when the dead were thrown into one common gulf, over which no prayer was uttered, and no memorial was left.

count of his visit, when a child, to the Tour de Constance, where protestant women were confined. M. de Boufflers has often related to me the details of that campaign of humanity, which he made to the south of France, with his uncle, the Marechal de Boufflers ; and of their visit to the Tour de Constance, where several protestant women were confined. They saw the Marechal enter, in gloomy silence ; but observing marks of sympathy on his countenance, they threw themselves at his feet, bathed them with their tears, and implored him to plead in their behalf. M. de Boufflers there saw Mademoiselle Durand, who at nearly fifty years of age had known no other world than a prison. She had been confined since she was eight years old, with her mother, who had been seized with her child at a place of public worship, and who died in her daughter's arms, in the Tour de Constance. Mademoiselle Durand was at length released, and lived some years in Paris. While M. de Boufflers was in the south, he told me that,

one day in his rambles, he reached the top of a hill, that overlooked the desert where the protestants were assembled at worship. He was in his military uniform, and in that hostile garb the most philanthropic of men was mistaken for an enemy. The audience dispersed with precipitation, but M. de Boufflers threw off his coat, flew down the hill, rallied the fugitives, and placing himself by Paul Rabeau the preacher, listened to an admirable sermon.*

* M. de Boufflers, whom Delille calls "*le modèle des Chevaliers, la fleur des Troubadours*," was an elegant writer, though perhaps still more distinguished for the charms of his conversation, which had an irresistible attraction. He had much of the polish of courts, but still more of the simplicity of the philosopher. His playful and original wit enchanted others, but he never suspected himself of possessing the slightest intellectual superiority. I knew him only in his advanced age, but he was the most amiable of old men. Time had respected his faculties and feelings, and had left him those best sensibilities of our nature, of which the contraction, or the loss, is the most gloomy circumstance of our closing history.

The edict of Louis XVI gave the protestants the privilege of enregistering their marriages, and legitimatised their children, leaving them, however, still at a distance from all the rights of citizens.

But the tide of public opinion flowed already full in favour of religious toleration. The mild and humane character of Louis XVI, who wished all within the pale of his dominion to be happy, was in sympathy with the sublime lessons of Malesherbes. Voltaire had also brought persecution into disgrace; the multitude had adopted the opinions of the Encyclopedists. Such as could neither reason nor feel could imitate: toleration was the general fashion; and the great event of the revolution approached.

LETTER III.

The same subject continued.

THE hour of emancipation arrived; the revolution took place, and was no doubt hailed by the protestants like the day-star from on high. Yet no one has dared to accuse them of having sullied their triumph by any excesses whatever. Restored to civic rights, and the protection of equal laws, the assemblies of the desert flew to the temples, which were now thrown open for their solemnities, and poured forth the tribute of their boundless gratitude.

Nothing could be more affecting than the public worship of the protestants, at which I was often present in the first years of the Revolution. The remembrance of past perils, the consciousness of present security, was a new joy, which, purified and exalted by a sentiment of devotion, excited emotions al-

most too powerful to sustain. Every bosom beat high with gratitude, every eye was bathed in tears!

When the reign of terror commenced, the protestants had their full share of its perils. The list of victims who perished on the scaffold contains, in proportion, the names of a greater number of protestants than catholics. The executioners did not stop to inquire into the religious creed of their victims.*

But previously to that period, a scene of horrible import to the protestants had already

* During the time of terror, every church in Paris, but that of the protestants, was shut. Encouraged by the example of our pastor, M. Marron, who with the heroism of devout resignation performed divine service every Sunday and Decadi, under the knife of the assassins, the protestants even then assembled regularly for public worship. Such as still survive cherish the recollection that, in those days of profanation and sacrilege, we could say with Joshua, "As for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord."

passed in the south of France, the great theatre of fanaticism. A massacre of the protestants took place in the year 1790, at Nismes.

However strange it may appear, it is nevertheless true, that this event produced no lasting impression on the public mind, and was in some sort absorbed in the mass of general calamity, which soon after spread itself over France. But the truth is, no events whatever leave any durable impression on a people in revolution. The destruction of the monarchy in 1792, the struggles of the republicans and the terrorists in 1793, seem to us almost as far lost in the lapse of time as the fall of Cæsar, or the wars of Marius and Scylla. We descend the pathway of a torrent, with impetuous swiftness, and have no leisure to remount the stream. In such circumstances no event enchains attention, or fastens on the memory. Revolutionary life is an *hors d'œuvre* in human existence—it re-

seems nothing else, and one of its mysteries is an unconquerable aversion from retrospection.

These reflections are peculiarly applicable to that period which succeeded the assassinations of Nismes, when the National Convention covered with a black veil the book of the constitution, and decreed that terror was the order of the day. The whole earth has heard how it accomplished its tremendous purpose. In this country, every brain was confounded, and every mind harrowed up, by the aspect of such strange and incalculable danger. We knew that the wide extent of France was a scene of calamity; but we had home-miseries, that left us no leisure to look abroad. If I may speak an instant of myself, I was then confined with my family in the prison of the Luxembourg, where we found our friends M. de Sillery and M. La Source, who were then on their trial before the revolutionary tribunal. Thither they were conducted by gens-

d'armes every morning, and they passed their evenings in our apartment. Three weeks after we reached their prison, they were dragged to the scaffold, with that illustrious band of the Gironde, the honour and pride of their ungrateful country, and for whose untimely fate she has paid the expiation. But let me turn from the mournful story of our murdered friends—their parting words to us, who had soothed the last moments of their lives at the peril of our own—their vows for the cause of liberty, which they were going to seal with their blood—let me turn from those cruel recollections, and resume my narrative.

Amidst the general acclamations with which the French nation hailed the revolution, the catholics and protestants of the south remained for some time in perfect harmony. They often sang *Te Deum* together, according to their respective rites, but which had all the same object. The beginning of religious and political evils in

France may be dated from the period of the emigration of the priests and nobles. "By their desertion," said Chamfort, "they will drive the nation to *sans-culotisme*." The prediction was verified.

The family of the *Ultras*, the descendants of which still embarrass the public counsels, began their operations by sending agents from Turin and Germany, to the south of France. At their arrival in the department of the Gard, the aspect of things was suddenly changed. The municipalities, by means of skilful and multiplied intrigues, were soon composed of catholics only; and companies of militia were formed exclusively of catholics. Incendiary pamphlets were circulated against the protestants, and deliberations in opposition to the new principles were signed by the catholics in midnight assemblies held in their churches. Protestations were made against any change in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and it was declared that no adhesion of Louis XVI to any such change

should be considered as valid, since he was not at complete liberty. The *Ultras* of 1790 were, like those of 1815, always “*plus royaliste que le Roi.*”

The *curés* distributed these protestations in their respective parishes. The oligarchic party soon proceeded from menaces to deeds of violence; men posted at the corners of the streets of Nismes, fired upon the protestants as they passed by; they were sometimes assailed by stones, sometimes wounded on the high-road with pitch-forks, and finally murdered in their dwellings.

It is not my purpose to relate the details of these assassinations, of which those that took place in 1815 are in such an exact spirit of imitation, that they seem to have been formed upon the same model. One incident, among numbers, will serve to show the fanaticism that prevailed at that period. A youth of fifteen years of age, passing by a military post, was asked, whether he was a catholic or a protestant: he answered, that he was a

protestant;—upon which the soldier fired at him, and the boy fell dead at his feet. “You might as well have killed a lamb,” said one of his comrades to the assassin:—“I promised,” he replied, “to kill four protestants for my share, and the boy will count for one.”

The municipality of Nismes, now composed of agents of the oligarchic party, were unmoved spectators of these enormities. They saw nothing, they heard nothing, and above all, they punished nothing. But while every dispatch from that corporation carried intelligence to the National Assembly of the fraternity that prevailed among the good citizens of Nismes, civil war broke forth in all its fury, and a general counter-revolution menaced the south of France.

It was now the turn of the protestants to triumph: they were joined by all the catholics who were friends to the revolution, and who at length perceived, that the hostilities which had commenced by religious dissensions, were meant to terminate in the subversion of the

new order of things, and the re-establishment of the ancient despotism.

The oligarchic party surprised the unarmed citizens, repulsed the first regular troops sent against them, and at length transformed the house of their chief into a fortress, communicating with the towers of the Dominican church, from whence they directed a murderous fire on the people. The *corps de reserve* of the patriot troops was posted in a square, opposite the convent of the Capuchins, and an officer was killed by a ball fired from the convent. The troops, thus irritated, broke open the convent doors, and five monks were massacred. A heavy discharge of musketry was at the same time fired from the towers of the Dominicans, where the counter-revolutionists were entrenched, waiting for fresh succours; but the patriots forced this position: headed by an officer of artillery, they dragged their cannon to the place, and in a short time silenced the fire from the towers. The convent still remained in hostility: pro-

positions of capitulation were offered to the besieged, and answered by a heavy fire from the house. Ladders were then applied to the walls, and after a bloody siege the convent was stormed. The leaders had, for the most part, fled; but some who had not found means to escape were put to the sword. Thus a just triumph was sullied by a crime: it was indeed committed in the fury of revenge—it was an act of vengeance for unparalleled enormities; but what provocation can palliate a deed of cruelty, or change the nature of guilt?

The work of civil war in the south of France was now terminated. We hear no more of religious dissension during a long interval of time. Civil and religious liberty were alike crushed under the reign of terror; the theophilanthropic Directory were tolerant; and their successor Bonaparte favoured the protestants because he hated the priests. A calm of twenty-five years had banished the

remembrance of the religious persecution which had ravaged the southern departments of France, when it again burst forth in all its hateful violence.

LETTER IV.

The same subject continued.

THE protestants partook sincerely in the general gladness with which the royal family of France were received on their first entrance in 1814. They had indeed been tolerated by Napoleon; and from the date of his concordat with the Pope, they had even been in possession of equal rights with the catholics, and had become alike the objects of imperial favour. But the most perfect religious liberty was a state to which the protestants had been so long accustomed, that it scarcely appeared to them a benefit. It seemed as common a gift of heaven as light or air; it was the peculiar character of the age, and belonged far less to the moderation of the sovereign than the philosophy of the times.

The protestants of the department of the Gard soon, however, discovered that, from

whatever motive they had hitherto been protected, protection was a blessing which they had now lost, and persecution an evil far less obsolete than they had imagined. Disturbances took place at Nismes almost immediately after the restoration. The mayor, M. de Castilan, a protestant, was publicly insulted at the theatre. The protestants were again pursued in the streets by the catholic populace assembled in crowds. Sanguinary songs were bawled forth in the *patois* of Languedoc, importing that the Huguenots must soon return to pray in the desert. Triumphal arches that had been erected by the protestants in honour of the king were taken down by the municipality, on pretext that the flowers were withered, but in reality to prevent their being burnt by the mob.

In the mean time, the catholic nobles sent an address of congratulation to Paris, in which they asserted, that to impose conditions on the monarch is to degrade him; and to require him to take an oath to maintain those

conditions, is to oblige him to call on Heaven to witness the most humiliating capitulation for the throne. "Such," say they, "are the sentiments of the faithful inhabitants of the city of Nismes, proud of the principles which they manifested in 1790."

This address, in direct hostility to the will of the monarch, solemnly proclaimed in the charter, made known the principal actors and agents of the ultra catholic faction in the south. That faction which menaced in 1814, and which carried its menaces into effect in 1815, was found to be one and the same with that which had committed the atrocities of 1790. The principal agent of that faction in the projected counter-revolution of 1790 again appeared on the scene. He avows his mission, and boasts of his achievements in 1790; displaying a brevet of nobility conferred on him by the ultra party, as a reward for his ability in exciting civil war, and of which he seems as proud as if he had obtained the *croix d'honneur* on the field of battle.

While this faction, in their incurable frenzy, alike regardless of the interests of the king and the people, and guided only by their own passions, filled the minds of the protestants with just alarm, Bonaparte landed from Elba, and once more seated himself on the throne of France.

Soon after this event, the Duke of Angoulême arrived at Nismes, and declared his solemn adhesion to the charter, in several proclamations, in which union between the two communions was warmly recommended. The municipality and the protestant ministers issued a similar proclamation to the inhabitant of Nismes. The Prince spoke the same language as the King, but the ultra party refused to hear.

A royalist army was now formed, and the protestants hastened to its standard, but were forced by the clamours of the catholic populace to retire. They did all that was left for them to do—they subscribed amply to the support of the army.

The duke of Angouleme left Nismes, and the royalist troops marched to a little town on the Rhone, called Le Pont du St. Esprit, on the limits of the department, where they were joined by the Prince. Another body marched towards Mendes, in the Lozere, where the imperial government was already recognized. They traversed without opposition the whole protestant track of the Cevennes; but aware of the situation of Mendes, they deemed it prudent to return to Nismes, which they reached in safety, after having been received in all the protestant villages with the most cordial hospitality.

On the 3d of April, the imperial standard was reared in every quarter; the military stationed at Nismes proclaimed the Emperor; and troops were instantly sent, by the imperial commander, to invest Le Pont du St. Esprit. A convention was made with the Prince, but its execution was suspended until it should be ratified by Bonaparte himself. The Duke of Angouleme was in the mean time a pri-

soner, but the ratification of the treaty arrived, and he embarked at Cette.

The royalist army then disbanded ; several volunteers were robbed by Bonaparte's soldiery in crossing Le Pont du St. Esprit, but the protestants had not the least share in those excesses, which were repressed, and severely punished when they came to the knowledge of the Commander-in-chief, General Gilly. In the confusion which arose on crossing the bridge, one man fell upon the stone-work of an arch and was wounded. This was the only accident that happened, and this was afterwards magnified into a dreadful massacre made by the protestants at Le Pont du St. Esprit, of the unhappy royalists who were precipitated into the Rhone. Official depositions have been since taken by magistrates on the spot, and the falsehood of these accusations has been fully recognized.

The royalist troops, dismissed by their officers, dispersed, but did not disarm as had

been stipulated in the capitulation. The only place where their passage occasioned any blood-shed was the village of Arpailargues. On the approach of the royalist companies towards that village, a catholic of the name of Bertrand, employed in the service of a family well known for their *ultra* zeal in the royalist cause, rode into the village, and spread a general alarm among its peaceful inhabitants. He told them that the royalist troops were approaching, that they had killed all the protestant ministers on their way, and committed the most horrible outrages. The whole of this information was false, no such events had happened, but the consequences were not less fatal. When the royalist troops arrived they found the whole population armed and prepared for defence, headed by the mayor. The troops advanced with their arms reversed, and were summoned by the mayor to lay them down before they entered. This was refused, and some of them attempted to force their way into the

village, upon which the peasants fired, and two soldiers were killed, and two wounded; the rest fled.

A great obscurity hangs over this unhappy occurrence, and over the motives that led Bertrand or his employers to spread a false alarm through this peaceful village. Immediately after the restoration, and while a terrible re-action desolated the south of France, the peasants of Arpaillargues were tried for this resistance to the royal troops. Five men and three women, all protestants, perished on the scaffold, and the man who had been the author of all the evil was acquitted. A girl of twelve years of age was tried with her mother; the child was long unable to speak for tears; but at last she told her advocate,*

* M. Lauze de Perez, advocate at the tribunal of Nismes; distinguished by the generous zeal with which he undertook the defence of the protestants, and who has published a voluminous detail of those events, which will furnish ample materials for history. M. Martin Rollin, a young protestant minister, had also the courage to raise

“Monsieur Bertrand vint dans toutes les maisons, dire partout, que les *Royaux* tuoient les petites filles, et les ministres protestans—en voyant accourir ma mere, je n’ai fait que la suivre.”* The child was acquitted, but her mother was put to death.

During the Hundred Days of Bonaparte’s second accession, no crime had been committed, but that which I have just related. As soon as the event of the battle of Waterloo was known in the department of the Gard, the royalists issued a proclamation dated the 3d of July, from the head-quarters of their army at Beaucaire. Gilly, the imperial General, collected troops at Nismes, and answered this proclamation by another, in which he exhorted the inhabitants to wait his voice in favour of the protestants, when all France was silent.

* “Monsieur Bertrand ran into all the houses crying out that the royalists were killing the little girls and the protestant ministers. Seeing my mother run I only followed her.”

quietly the arrival of news from Paris. An indefinite armistice was concluded between the two armies. On the 15th of July, intelligence arrived of the entrance of the King at Paris. He was proclaimed on the 16th with great solemnity at Nismes, and the white flag was every where hoisted.

A few days after these events the national guard of Nismes was disarmed, by separate bodies of the volunteer-royalist army, who entered the town tumultuously, observing no discipline, and who were armed with pistols, muskets, and swords. They assembled before the barracks, where a few of Bonaparte's troops remained, on whom they fired; but at length a capitulation was agreed on, upon condition that the imperialists would go out unarmed. But they had no sooner laid down their arms than they were assailed, and many were slaughtered; a few escaped by flight.

The tocsin was rung during three hours that night in all the churches of Nismes, in order to call together the neighbouring ca-

tholic villagers. A populace in fury entered the town, forced the doors of the houses of protestants, and compelled them to deliver up their arms. They were then left without defence, and the work of death was consummated by bands of lawless fanatics. In their van-guard was Jaques Dupont, commonly called *Tres Tallion*, in the *patois* of Languedoc, on account of his voracious appetite; *Tres Tallion* signifying three portions. Such were the atrocities committed by this wretch, that even his ignoble condition will not shelter him in oblivion; his crimes belong to history.

It is not my purpose to relate the details of horror that long desolated Nismes, and of which multiplied narrations have been published: all Europe has heard the dreadful story.

The local authorities of Nismes, with the Prefect at their head, remained inactive spectators of these enormities. The supreme magistrate of the department had other oc-

cupations than that of warding off the stroke of the assassin from his constituents. He was often employed, it is said, in writing pastoral poetry, and at that very period sent a sonnet to the Paris journals on the violet, arraigning that fallen flower with merciless severity.*

The *ultra*-chiefs of the royalist army remained with their forces at Beaucaire, a few leagues distant from Nismes, while these acts of violence were perpetrated. They knew that a part of the inhabitants of that city found no protection from the laws, and no succour from the magistrates; they knew all that was passing, and they remained quietly posted on the banks of the Rhone. When they entered Nismes it was too late; the past could not be recalled, and they contributed nothing to the security of the future.

* The King, far less rigid than the Prefect, on the first appearance of violets in the spring that followed their rebellion, distributed bouquets of that insurrectional flower to the ladies of the court, telling them that there was "an amnesty for the violet."

In the midst of these atrocities, a mockery of an election of deputies for the national representation took place at Nismes. It was now remembered that, at the period of the elections for the department of the Gard in 1790, assassinations had been committed by the agents of the same faction that now prevailed, in order to excite terror, and govern the elections. The same events were again renewed; and some of the very same agents, employed in 1790, appeared on the scene in 1815. The consequences were also similar at both periods. The *ultra*-party met with no opposition; unanimity of opinion at Nismes was obtained at the point of the dagger, and, as I have already mentioned, thirteen protestant electors were murdered in their way to the electoral college.

LETTER V.

The same subject continued.

THE atrocities committed during this period were not confined to Nismes. The country-houses of the protestants in its vicinity were pillaged, and their possessions devastated. At Uzes, a town of Languedoc, composed chiefly of protestants, many persons were massacred in broad day before the house of the sub-prefect. That frigid spectator of crimes was punished by no court of justice, because there is no penal statute against a hard heart. But public indignation has found out a mode of being avenged. The square where the sub-prefect lived has changed its name, and the passer-by now sees written against the wall, in large characters, that seem to wear a tint of blood, the name of the sub-prefect.

There was another spectator of the mur-

der at Uzes, by whom they were witnessed with far different emotions. A catholic priest, the Abbé Payer (let us remember that name in our orisons!), implored the assassins to show mercy—he threw himself on his knees before them—he pleaded, with all the energy of virtue, but in vain.

The protestants, who were yet spared, looked forward with augmenting terror to the anniversary of the day of St. Bartholomew, which now drew near. A general alarm had been spread in the protestant village of Ners, and the adjoining country, where it was publicly said that every protestant was doomed to perish on that fatal day.

The preceding night some armed companies arrived at Nismes. The peasants who had been warned of their approach, opposed their entrance, and a battle ensued with equal loss on both sides. The perfidious aggressors returned to Nismes, declaring that the village of Ners was in full revolt, and that they had lost many of their comrades. A detachment

of Austrian troops had been sent into the department of the Gard, and an Austrian corps now repaired to Ners. The unhappy protestants, subject to daily outrages, mistook these troops for new enemies, and a bloody contest took place ; an Austrian officer was killed, and a protestant magistrate perished. The protestants fought in defence of their homes, their families, and that faith for which their fathers had bled. Those among them who were made prisoners were instantly shot, and the next day the protestant villages were all disarmed by order of the prefect. He foresaw that civil war was on the point of extending itself to the heart of the Cevennes, to those mountains where the troops of Louis XIV had so often fled before armed peasants who were made valiant by despair.

The Austrian general repaired with his troops to the Cevennes, and was welcomed as a deliverer in the protestant villages. Bereft of all protection from their magistrates, the protestants hailed the Austrian invaders of

France as their friends and allies, and readily surrendered to them their arms; expecting that the same measure would be extended to their enemies, who had laid waste the whole department. The Austrian commander was surprised to see the pacific disposition of the people who had been represented to him as in full revolt. He no doubt felt singular sensations on finding himself placed as a guard to protect Frenchmen from the aggression of Frenchmen. This Austrian general might with propriety have addressed the catholic priests in the words of Abner,—

“ Eh, quoi !—d'un prêtre est ce là le langage ?
Moi, nourri dans la guerre, aux horreurs du carnage,
Des vengeances des rois ministre rigoureux,
C'est moi qui prete ici ma voix au malheureux.
Et vous, qui lui devez des entrailles de père,
Vous, ministre de paix, dans les tems de colère,
Couvrant d'un zèle faux votre ressentiment,
Le sang à votre gré coule trop lentement. ”

The conflict of Ners was the only instance

of resistance made by the protestants during the persecution. They had been led like sheep to the slaughter; and it was only by their anticipation of St. Bartholomew's-day that their unexampled patience was roused to legitimate defence.

A mysterious veil still covers a part of those disastrous events. The government made repeated efforts to put a stop to the sanguinary persecution of the protestants, but its mandates when they reached the south lost all their energy. Some power, that dwelt in darkness and invisibility, palsied every effort towards good, and seemed fixed in permanent resistance to the return of order and justice.

General la Garde was at length appointed by government to command the military force of the department, and protect the protestants. I have already described, in a letter published some time since, the memorable scene that took place at Nismes when the protestant church, which had been shut up during a long interval, was opened by the order of

General La Garde. I have mentioned the alacrity with which this call to public worship was obeyed; the noble impulse of piety that led the protestants in crowds to their temple—the asylum of their sorrows—they felt that “a day in those courts was better than a thousand.”—I have described the solemnities of that day, interrupted by the vociferations of a frantic populace, and the loud and repeated blows that assailed the door.

The preacher * who, with the noble courage of piety, had mounted the pulpit, ceased, and his audience recommended themselves to God—at that moment General La Garde, who had hastened to the post of danger, received a ball from one of the assassins, which entered near his heart. He covered the blood gushing from his wound with his manteau, and protected the retreat of the protestants from the church. This generous

* M. Juillerat, now one of our protestant ministers at Paris.

deliverer, this hero of humanity, languished during ten months on a bed of pain, but at length recovered from the wound.

On the evening of that day, the protestant churches of Nismes were all broken open by the populace; and the registers, psalm-books, and gowns of the ministers torn into shreds, and burned.

The Duke of Angouleme, who was then at Toulouse, on receiving intelligence of these events, flew to Nismes, and hastened to visit General La Garde; but he was told that the General was not in a state to bear the interview, and was hurried out of his apartment. The Prince sternly refused the honours which were offered him by the National Guard of Nismes, and also an address that was presented to him by a body of the catholic clergy and some of the first ladies of Nismes, in behalf of the assassins,* who were then arrested

* It is well-known that *Tres Tallion* was not only amply supplied while he was in prison with the means of sub-

as an affair of form, and soon afterwards acquitted.

But France was now advancing toward her destinies. The disgrace of the *ultras* approached, and the constitutional monarchy was soon to prevail.

The Prefect of the Gard, and poet of the violet, received his dismissal : his departure was undisturbed by benedictions : all that was heard was the low plaint of the widows and orphans of the protestants of Nismes, who seemed to demand of him those whom they had lost.

A new prefect arrived in the department of the Gard. He was just, and the protestants hailed him as a deliverer. They had so long suffered from oppression, that, instead of feeling a calm approbation of the discharge

sistence, but that he received as many presents of dried fruits and sweet-meats from the nuns of the south, as were formerly lavished upon *Ver-Vert* by the nuns of the Loire.

of a duty, they were affected by justice as if it had been heroic virtue.

Let us hope that the persecution of 1815 will be the last that shall stain the French annals. The history of the protestants of France has been hitherto filled, like Ezekiel's roll, only "with matter of mourning, lamentation, and woe." It is time that they should participate in that progress towards what is better, which marks a new era in human affairs, and that fanaticism should be for ever buried in the dust of past ages.

LETTER VI.

Chamber of Deputies.

WHILE the government in 1815 had adopted a system of great severity against the adherents of Bonaparte, during his second reign, it had been able to oppose no restraint to the excesses of a violent re-action, and had thus delivered up France to the vengeance of a party, too well known by the denomination of *ultra-royalist*. This party had seized upon all authority in the departments,; and we have seen what calamities resulted from its dominion, and which the government, weak and vacillating in its measures, had for some time no power to repress. But it assumed at length a firmer posture, and found sufficient force to resist a party more fatal to France than the armies of foreign invaders. The Chamber of Deputies which, as I have already observed, at that period represented not the

French nation, but the *ultra* faction, having at length ventured to propose new modifications of the charter, the King, who understood the faith of treaties better than the *Ultras*, answered this proposition by dissolving the Chamber on the 5th of September 1816.

But before I close the page of *ultra* domination, I must not forget that, while it lasted, Nismes was not the only theatre of public calamity, though it might well claim the pre-eminence in wretchedness. Lyons had also borne its share of oppression. That obscurity which envelopes the scenes of re-action that succeed great political changes, hangs over the insurrections of Lyons. The oligarchic party insist on their magnitude and enormity; the rest of the nation believe that they were encouraged, in order to serve as demonstrations that the old despotism was the only fit form of government for the French people.

It is pretended that not only many of the lowest class in Lyons, but of the peasantry in the neighbouring villages, were incited to

acts of insubordination. Sometimes they were provoked to pronounce a forbidden name—sometimes seduced to wear a forbidden ribbon, and, ignorant and betrayed, were surprised to find they had been so guilty, that life was the expiation required.

“ Qu’importe qu’au hasard un sang vil soit versé.” *

The events of Lyons have been the subject of a famous trial at Paris, on which occasion many deeds of darkness were dragged to day, though perhaps part of the tale was left untold ; but history will use her privilege of speaking truth.

The King sent Marshal Marmont to Lyons, to repair as far as possible the evils he deplored. This mission of benevolence was well and nobly fulfilled, and Lyons was soon after his arrival restored to tranquillity.

A new Chamber of Deputies was summoned. This chamber contains some men of

* Racine.

the most eminent abilities, and approaches nearer to the Constituant Assembly than any subsequent legislature. But the French have yet to learn, among other things, that it is not necessary to the welfare of the state, that every member should speak, but that the duty of the majority is to listen. National representation is making rapid progress in France, but has not yet reached maturity.

The French passed from the vociferations of the Convention, and the bravos of the tribunes, to the profound silence of the Council of Five Hundred. Bonaparte disliked animadversion; and the surest way of preventing ill-timed observations was, by having an assembly of mutes. Some travellers pretend, that in the icy region of the poles, the words as they are uttered freeze in air, and are heard from all parts at the return of thaw. Imperial despotism had long frozen the sounds of liberty, and France hails with transport the renewed accents.

The Chamber of Deputies possesses excel-

lent speakers, yet what passes cannot properly be called a discussion. The members, when they intend to speak, are obliged to inscribe their names on a list, for or against the question in discussion; the order in which they are to speak cannot be inverted; they must go to the tribune in the succession in which their names are marked; and it must be admitted that this manner of debating very little resembles a debate. We seldom hear of those interrogatories which a minister must submit to answer in the House of Commons.

When the assembly, after a general discussion, examines the separate articles of a law, the investigation takes more the character of a discussion. But French legislators have a difficulty to conquer, from which perhaps even a member of the House of Commons would shrink. Not one word are they permitted to articulate in their place; if they think proper to speak, they must leave their seat, march to the tribune, ascend the steps, and when they have reached their pulpit, the

glow of feeling has perhaps been chilled on the way—the sentiment is evaporated—the ideas are dispersed—the energies of mind have sunk in the ceremonial—and he who eagerly claimed a right to speak, finds at last that he has nothing to say.

The Chamber will probably make a regulation to prevent the members from reading their discourses.

There are some good and loyal deputies, who believe the country would be in danger if they failed to transmit to the public the mass of their legislative opinions. They appear at the tribune with a manuscript of tremendous size in their hand, their head bent on the paper, their spectacles placed on the nose, and with a pre-determination not to spare the chamber one single page, although the discussion is perhaps nearly closed, and they are not of the class of speakers who find new arguments when the old are exhausted. The assembly sometimes, unable to endure any more, call to their honourable colleague

to pass over a few leaves of his manuscript: but the next morning that very member is called *un orateur* in all the journals; and his constituents are not apprized that the assembly considered him as taking a cruel advantage, in his harangue, of their constitutional obligation to listen.

We have also some metaphysical deputies, who never speak on any question without going back to the origin of society, and who might well be addressed in the words of Les Plaideurs, “*Avocat, passez au deluge!*”

The Chamber of Deputies is composed of parties professing the most opposite opinions; it may be divided into four classes, under the denomination of the *Ultras*, the *Centre*, the *Doctrinaires*, and “though last, not least,” the *Liberaux*, or *Independans*.

The *Ultra* deputies, placed on the right side of the hall, and calling themselves the *coté droit*, in imitation of their predecessors in the Constituant Assembly, are continually declaiming from the tribune against the peo-

ple they represent. Their dreams are of popular insurrections and conspiracies, and the crimes and misdemeanors of philosophy. Their *mot d'ordre* is the throne and the altar. These partisans of the past always go back one or two centuries in search of any French title to distinction or glory. They admire no epocha of its government but that of the Grand Monarque, and they have heard of no great general since Turenne and Villars. They once knew France, but they know nothing of the French nation. Many of that party have been absent during the revolution; they came back to complain of their sufferings, to demand redress for their wrongs, and their return may be called an invasion.

The party of the *Centre* is formidable from its numbers, and is composed, for the most part, of men unmoved and motionless amidst the most important deliberations, but making the balance lean sometimes in favour of the Greeks, and sometimes of the Trojans. This party possess an inert force difficult to van-

quish, but little more can be said of them, and they say nothing for themselves. For we must not confound with the *Centre* the sect of *Doctrinaires*, who are sometimes found in its ranks.

The *Doctrinaires* are the avowed partisans of liberal opinions, but who believe that the best means of securing their triumph is not to oppose the ministers when they are in the right, and to support their measures when they are constitutional. The members of this sect therefore, forming a branch of the great revolutionary heresy, are neither men of the ministry, nor men of the opposition ; in short, they are *Doctrinaires*. They probably obtained that denomination from the metaphysical and abstract manner in which a few of their most distinguished members treat political questions.

The *coté gauche*, composed of the *Libéraux* or *Indépendans*, forms the van-guard of French liberty. The *Indépendans* are of that class of men whose principles overthrew the

old despotism, and who made the revolution. They have sometimes hoped, sometimes despaired of freedom, but always adhered to her cause, for which they now struggle under the banner of the charter. The *Independans* belong to the great party of the French nation. Many of the most distinguished leaders of the *coté gauche* were chosen in the last elections, and that party is considerably augmented. In the deplorable Chamber of Deputies of 1815, they formed a small minority; which was all the support the country had then left. Even then, however, M. Voyer D'Argenson obliged the Chamber to hear those words, "The protestants are massacred in the south." He was called to order with loud vociferations, but that call to order was a *mention honorable* which will never be forgotten. We have learnt in this country to be grateful, above all, to those who, in a moment of peril, mount the breach; because we know that in a time of revolution there is no greater guilt than weakness with its fatal complaisance; and we

know also that a people may conquer Europe, and yet be moral cowards. There are too many men in France, who, as it was said of a famous terrorist, "*protegent les vainqueurs*."

Such was the desperate state of things in 1815, and so unequal the combat which the opposition had to sustain with a triumphant majority, that the ministers sometimes joined themselves to the *coté gauche*, and supported the people against the majority of their representatives. This state of things was too strange and too violent to last; and the best defender of the constitution was Louis XVIII himself, when he dissolved that Chamber.

The *coté gauche* can boast of very eloquent speakers, and some who speak admirably without book. This power of haranguing a popular assembly unprepared, and of meeting difficulties as they arise, in a political discussion, is a talent yet rare in France, but which is making every day a sensible progress. The French are naturally eloquent, but till the revolution they never had any oc-

casion for the noblest use of eloquence, that of defending the rights of mankind. Yet, even under the ancient monarchy they could boast of many illustrious orators in the pulpit and at the bar. Louis XIV, in the midst of his overwhelming grandeur, sometimes heard the boldest truths delivered from the pulpit, by the immortal preachers of his time; and when truth came from their lips, he had sufficient greatness of mind not to shrink from its severity. He felt that the orator who spoke in the name of the Divinity, was placed beyond the pale of his authority. The sermons of Massillon, glowing with all the charm of his divine eloquence, taught new lessons to a despotic prince; those sermons would indeed furnish a complete code of the rights of man, and of the duty of kings. This courage of genius distinguished also in a peculiar manner the great French writers of the former part of the eighteenth century, but it had then far less merit. Every thing then was hastening towards a change;

France had then half emerged from darkness, a new track of light was upon her path, and her bosom throbbed with the presentiment of liberty.

To return for a moment to the Chamber of Deputies: The great struggle which has been carried on by the legislature for the maintenance of the constitution, in presence of the armies of occupation, is highly honourable to France. Perhaps in the mysterious chain that links successive events, the time when foreign armies filled this country may not be lost for mankind. The crusades that so long devastated Europe roused the human mind from its long lethargy, and unfolded its intellectual powers. Who shall say that the armies of the north have not imbibed new ideas of freedom and independence while they sojourned in France? Perhaps the travelled soldier, at his return, may have translated into the language of his native hut what he had heard of liberty in this country; and the germs of that new production may

be scattered over those enslaved regions, like the flowers that decorate the snows of their deserts.

LETTER VII.

The Law of Elections.

THE ordinance of the 5th of September, 1816, had overthrown the dominion of the *Ultras*, but the government felt that the only efficacious means of calming the general disquietude that prevailed throughout France would be to give the nation a guarantee for its future security. The project of a new law for the election of deputies to the legislative body was presented to the Chamber in 1817. The charter had recognised the *right* of election; but the mode in which that right was to be exercised was to be enacted by the legislature, and the deputies had hitherto been called together according to the law prescribed by Bonaparte. This imperial mode of election served the purposes of that despotism of which he had proved himself so cunning and skilful a fabricator. Let us

hope that the dangerous invention may be lost. Woe to mankind if it be not more effectually destroyed than the fatal weapon which one of Ariosto's heroes threw into the sea, and vainly sought to bury for ever!

The primary assemblies nominated the electors, who were chosen from the class immediately above their own; and those electors named the deputies. There were thus two distinct acts of election; by the first of which, under the insidious mask of a very popular and extended franchise, the power of election was thrown into the hands of the lowest, and consequently the most dependent part of the community, and over whom the higher orders were in possession of the most complete influence. But this would not alone have answered the purpose. Bonaparte, therefore, who was aware that the civil functions could never be exercised more favourably for him than when under the influence of the military, ordered that every member of the legion of honour should be added to

the *electoral college* (as it was termed) of his district. Thus he had the power of adding, as occasion might require, as many individuals as he pleased to the electoral body.

By the new law of election the right of voting was restricted to persons paying direct taxes to the amount of 300 francs a year. The elections were thus placed in the hands of the most respectable and independent class of the community. One article of the charter had besides regulated that a fifth of the deputies should be renewed every year. The ministry acquired great credit by having obtained from an assembly, still containing many *ultra* members, a law so favourable to national liberty. The most remarkable circumstance in this discussion was that the ministry, contrary to all established usage, supported vehemently a most popular law; and whilst they performed the task of obeying implicitly the will of the King, they merited and obtained the applause of their country. The eloquent speech of M. Cuvier on this oc-

casion produced a great impression. The great naturalist exhibited himself as a great statesman; and the man who had long been distinguished for his profound knowledge in all that appertains to the economy and mysteries of nature, showed that he was also able to appreciate and assert the rights of mankind. In the mean time the elections, especially the last, displayed the noble spectacle of a people exercising their new privileges with calmness and dignity. Wearied of change, instructed by experience in the lessons of moderation, but determined to assert with firmness their dear-bought rights, the electors conducted themselves in a manner highly honourable, and the elections were every where such as the *Ultras* call democratic, and the nation at large, constitutional. The forms of election observed here are altogether different from those of England. The people of that country, where the exercise of popular rights first sprang up, may venture to be tumultuous when they think fit. The nation knows how

- to arrest the torrent in its course, and is sure of being heard, when she says, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no further." But the hustings of Westminster would prove highly dangerous at Paris. I respect these gymnastic exercises in England, because I have been nurtured in the belief that whatever my countrymen do for liberty they do well; but I am persuaded that in France a representative government is not robust enough to bear hard blows.

No person can enter the place where the electoral colleges assemble, but an elector. The presidents and vice-presidents of each college are named by the government; and these nominations are considered as a sort of intimation, that they are men on whom it would be agreeable that the electors should fix their choice. But this hint, indirectly given, is only taken when the best interests of the country sanction the advice. M. de St. Aulaire and M. Chabot de la Tour, for instance, were sent to preside over the electo-

ral college of the *Departement du Gard*; they were both named deputies: M. de St. Aulaire has since nobly defended the cause of the protestants, and M. Chabot de la Tour is himself a protestant. In the *Departement de la Sarthe*, on the contrary, the president of the electoral college found his influence altogether ineffectual against the force of public opinion. On the rejection of a deputy who had been nominated, the president, without consulting the charter, suspended the election until the return of a courier whom he dispatched to Paris. The electors, far from separating as was expected, encamped in the town, and the moment the dispatch arrived from Paris, ordering the election to go on, General Lafayette was nominated. The *Ultras* dreaded this nomination, as they well might; they knew well that that name was itself a host in the ranks of the opposing army. Others have also loved liberty, but how many have loved it amiss! How many would purchase, with all they possess, the

power of effacing one little paragraph from that inflexible record the *Moniteur*! But General La Fayette is one of the few who, in their passage through the revolution, have nothing to ask of oblivion. Wherever we open the volume of his political life, we find him ever unalterably the same :

“ Such in those moments as in all the past,
Oh ! save my country, Heaven ! shall be his last.”

No discussion is permitted in the assemblies of the electoral college on the merits of the respective candidates ; from the apprehension that the colleges would be transformed into clubs, and that among a people so fond of talking, a speaker who had once obtained *la parole* would never be prevailed upon to hold his tongue. The people, however, well understand the value of their right of election. They know the price it has cost. They are not ignorant that they have paid for it with thirty years of revolution, with their tranquillity, their fortunes, their children ; and

we shall soon have occasion to see that they regard it, like the sacred ark, which no impious hand could touch with impunity. During the last election at Paris, a friend of mine passed a group of people who were talking politics in the street, when one man, stepping out of the group, pointed with his hand to a *placard* with the names of the electors, and exclaimed, *This is the revolution.*

The electoral colleges have a *garde d'honneur* at the door of the hall where they assemble. The French admit that the English are perfectly right in sending the military to a certain distance from the spot where an election is about to take place. They know that the independence of a body of men exercising their electoral right, as in the discharge of any other civic function, would be assailed by the presence of bayonets intended to overawe; at their aspect, liberty fled from the French soil, as the divinities of Troy abandoned the sacred city filled with Grecian soldiers: but the French are so ac-

customed to consider what they call a *garde d'honneur* as a mere mark of respect, which means nothing more ; that it appears to them a duty to show the same deference to the electoral body, as they would to any distinguished personage.

It must also be observed that the centinels on this occasion are composed of the national guard, who, though they carry fire-locks, are not soldiers, but armed citizens—a portion of the sovereign people. The French have a great deal to ameliorate and correct, not only in their institutions but in their habits, before they attain the dignity of free-men. They are accustomed to behold themselves too much, and too well guarded : wherever they turn their steps, they find a soldier in their path. He waits for them at the end of every avenue, at the portico of the Museum, in the Hall of the Institute, at the entrances of the theatres, and even at the doors of a private ball room. The people however, it should be added, are beginning to dislike his presence,

though the only costume in which his sight is odious to them is that of a Swiss uniform. But let us hope that this aversion towards a soldier in *one* shape will grow into a general detestation of military influence. Never let the French forget that, while they were the masters of the world, they were the slaves of a soldier, as the poet said of Rome,

... "Maitresse du monde, esclave aux bords du Tibre."

LETTER VIII.

The Liberty of the Press.

THE constitutional charter had guaranteed the liberty of the press, and had provided that a law should be passed to punish its abuses; but this was a subject of perplexing difficulty. How was a law to be framed, which might repress the licentiousness, without too much shackling the liberty of the press? A law had indeed been presented to the Chamber in 1815, and adopted; it was proposed as a temporary expedient only, and to be exchanged for a fundamental and constitutional law. Among a number of arbitrary articles, in harmony with the predominant spirit of the year 1815, one especially ordered writers to be brought to trial, who were found guilty of any *indirect* provocation against the government. What is an indirect provocation? It was felt by every one that

any thing might be deemed such, by subtle lawyers professionally used to “twist words and meanings as they please.” A counsellor of the ancient Parliament of Paris said; “Donnez moi quatre lignes de l’écriture d’un homme, j’y trouverai de quoi le faire pendre.”*

Amidst this frightful latitude of interpretation, and with the good will to punish which then prevailed, every provocation that was not direct was at least sure of being indirect; and in this state of things, so hostile to freedom and the charter, the Chamber of 1815 was fully recognised. Another point in this law which raised a general outcry, was the enactment, that offences of the press should be tried by the tribunal of correctional-police.

The ordinary jurisdiction of this tribunal is limited to inferior offences; such as riots,

* Give me four lines of a man’s hand-writing, and I will find wherewithal to hang him.

assaults, petty frauds, and larcenies: it can inflict no degrading punishment or *peine infamante*: it is essentially an inferior court, composed of subaltern judges; and it was thought peculiarly ill qualified for the consideration of such questions as are raised in all cases of libel, which involve, though not matters of taste, at least refinements of criticism—the ambiguous import of terms, the construction of an innuendo, the interpretation of an allusion, the probable effects of an abstract opinion on the public mind. Points like these, it was thought, were not analogous with, but in contrast with those that usually occupied the attention of the judges, who but an hour before might have been compelled to listen to the offensive details of a midnight riot, or investigate the circumstance of a petty larceny or fraud, and would be then called upon to decide on the first principles of liberty and government involved in a prosecution for libel.

In 1817 the ministers presented a new law

repressive of the abuses of the press, and which, although in some respects better than the preceding one, was far from satisfying the friends of the constitution. This law had retained one great fault of the law of 1815, which was that an author was obliged, before he published, to send a declaration of his intention to the police, accompanied by some copies of his work : but this was not all ; if the work was found reprehensible by the police, it was immediately seized ; and the ill-fated author tried, and often condemned to fine and imprisonment, for a production which had never been seen beyond the office of the police, and which consequently could have produced no bad impression on the public. This new law, which, like its predecessors, might rather be called a statute for enslaving than liberating the press, gave rise to so many discordant opinions in the Chamber of Deputies, and was sent to the Chamber of Peers so changed and mutilated by what was called amendments, in almost every

article, that its execution became scarcely possible. It was rejected by a great majority in the Chamber of Peers, and this the public applauded ; since it was better to suffer a little longer under arbitrary but temporary laws, than to pass a fundamental law on the freedom of the press, that contained not one article that was favourable to liberty.

I cannot leave this debate in the Chamber of Deputies on the liberty of the press, without observing that, though its issue proved that the liberal party were not yet the strongest, the country had every thing to hope from the spirit and eloquence with which they defended this great question. The speech of M. Camille-Jourdan, which was not a prepared harangue, but the effusion of the moment, produced the most powerful effect. The public who filled the galleries, as well as the members of the Chamber, listened with extraordinary emotion, and seemed to feel themselves bound in those golden chains, which the ancient poets believed to be an attribute of eloquence.

Some counsellors of state, consequently members of government, also combated this law, although it had been presented by the government, and thus honourably sacrificed the considerations of personal interest, and *l'esprit de corps*, at the shrine of national rights, and liberal principles. The public however, while they respect the conduct of many of the individuals who compose the council of state, sometimes inquire why that council still exists, since it bears no constitutional character, since it is not mentioned in the charter, but figures only in the budget ; and why it still forms a kind of tribunal, of which the temporary judges decide the most important questions, on which the interests and fortune of citizens depend. These inquiries are not yet answered, but are often reiterated ; the charter being for true constitutionalists, what the church is for true catholics : *hors de la charte, point de salut*.

The charter, while it fixed the great points of legislation, could not enter into all the

details which were left for subsequent regulation. Many abuses that existed in the imperial system of government have not yet disappeared ; they seem to be a part of Bonaparte's legacy to the French nation. In the code of our present laws we still trace some strokes of his pencil. Some one said of Mademoiselle Scudery, *On voit que l'amour a passé par là* ; so we may often discern in some vestige of injustice, some relic of oppression, *que Bonaparte a passé par là*. The soldier may adore his standard ; the amateur of the arts may admire his public monuments ; but the friend of humanity would wish to cover his victories with a veil, and the lover of liberty would seek to purify the marble which his steps have sullied.

The government has at length proposed those new laws to the Chamber, on publications in general. The first, regulating the penalties that may be incurred ; the second, the forms to be observed in the proceedings ; and the third, whatever regards periodical

works. They have just been adopted after a long discussion. It must be admitted that they contain a singular mixture of provisions favourable at once to popular liberty and to arbitrary power. The introduction of the trial by jury, and permission given to prove, by the testimony of witnesses, the truth of imputations brought against public functionaries, are, no doubt, important meliorations; but on the other hand, the penalties inflicted for violations of the law are very heavy, and the forms of proceeding are in proportional severity.

The freedom from censorship of the daily and periodical journals is also established; but the proprietor of a journal must deposit more than one hundred thousand francs in the hands of government as a guarantee, previous to its publication. Liberty can certainly never be purchased too dear: governments have often attempted to destroy it, but it is now for the first time put up to sale.

The abolition of censors to the daily jour-

nals has given general satisfaction; their functions being terminated, the exercise of thought is no longer prohibited, though it is subject to a duty. The journals will now, it may be hoped, assume a new character; they will no longer chant bespoke eulogies in chorus, or adhere to their fatiguing monotony of opinion. They have indeed become so passive and so nugatory, that one might have been tempted to think they had received the same kind of order respecting liberty that was given by the great Frederic with regard to Paradise; who, upon a soldier having committed suicide, after hearing a fine sermon on that subject, commanded that Paradise should henceforth be mentioned no more, "*ni en bien, ni en mal.*"

LETTER IX.

The Concordat.

THE codes of Napoleon were not abolished at the restoration, and still form the existing laws of the country. In the civil code there was much that was good, with some considerable defects; but the penal code is too severe, above all in whatever regards offences against government. Some of these laws, full of the arbitrary spirit of the lawgiver, and which it would have been well to have thrown aside, are yet carefully preserved; while the Concordat, which perhaps it would have been right to preserve, was entirely rejected. That Concordat conciliated spiritual and temporal things tolerably well; and it would have been prudent to forbear improving what was already an improvement. But the *Ultras*, ecclesiastical and lay, insisted that his Most Christian Majesty, the eldest son of the

Church, was bound to purify his legitimate government from a Concordat stained from its birth with the original sin of usurpation. They were blind to the danger of being perhaps obliged to forego their project, if the new Concordat should be disapproved of by the nation. It was indeed the great principle of Napoleon's government, in legislation and in war, *d'aller en avant*. But in so doing he was armed with the power of a despot ; he had no charter to restrain him, and whatever he did, " the cause was in his will." He had taught the Pope, like the rest of the world, the lesson of submission. He had summoned him to Paris, in order to place the imperial crown on his head ; had afterwards made Rome a department of France, and imprisoned his Holiness at Fontainebleau, having marched him through France with an escort of gens-d'armes.*

* Bonaparte practised every outrage against his Holiness, but that of dragging him by his *white* hairs. And even

A new Concordat being a measure decided upon, it became necessary to name a negotiator, and the choice fell on M. de Blacas. He was *ministre de la maison du roi* in 1814; he had treated the billets-doux which passed at that time between Paris and the island of Elba, as idle and imaginary follies, and refused to believe in Bonaparte's invasion till the tricolor flag floated at Lyons. M. de Blacas appears to have altogether mistaken the sentiments of the French people respecting a new Concordat. A stranger to France and all its present interests and feelings, he was very liable to make mistakes. The nation disapproved of some things in the Concordat of Bonaparte, but they had many reasons to apprehend that the Concordat of M. de Blacas might be worse. Determined, however, to give the French what they so little desired, this he is charged with by M. de Chateaubriant, but which M. de Pradt has contradicted, by declaring, from his personal knowledge, that this circumstance never took place, and also that the Pope's hair is completely *black*.

M. de Blacas and Cardinal Gonsalvi patched up a Concordat, which they signed and sent to Paris.

But this was not all :—the most difficult and delicate part of the business yet remained to be accomplished, which was, its promulgation. It reposed a long time after its arrival in the *porte-feuille* of the minister. Those who had framed it seemed afraid of what they had done : they dreaded the sentence about to be passed by the Parisians, the outcry of the serious, and the raillery of the gay. Detached parts of it were made known, and copies were afterwards circulated in manuscript, but which the journalists were forbid to publish. These copies were handed about like a new song, put into rhyme, and set to music. This ill-fated Concordat was at length suffered to be published, but not in a French journal : it made its first appearance in an English newspaper which is printed at Paris. It was thought that it would have a more

modest air in English ; and it was besides not unusual at that time to receive French intelligence in Paris from English newspapers. The Concordat having been thus cautiously made known to the people, a minister had at last the courage to present it boldly, and read it aloud, to the Chamber of Deputies. The die was now cast;—and never since diplomacy began was a poor treaty so laughed at and so turned into ridicule. It required indeed some boldness in the ministry to present the Concordat of Francis I, and Leo X, to the French nation of the nineteenth century ; to a nation of revolutionists, who shudder at the idea of looking back a day beyond 1789, and who believe themselves separated by an eternal barrier from even the latter times of the old monarchy. There was something bold in passing over, in one instant, the space that separated Francis I and Louis XVIII. It was recollected also, that even in the sixteenth century the Concordat had occasioned

a general commotion in the state, and was considered as betraying at once the civil and religious rights of the kingdom.

The French clergy acknowledged the Pope as their spiritual master, but were always in opposition to his temporal authority. These disputes were carried on with animosity in France, from the moment the popes began to consider the priests as mere instruments of their power. There usually exists a spirit of independence in a large body of men. The Parliament of Paris had been compelled to enregister the Concordat, but not till they had tried every means of resistance, and every art of delay; nor till having at last sent two counsellors to expostulate with the King, he threw them into a dungeon.

It was asserted that, in now adopting this gothic Concordat, the same consequences must naturally follow, such as the sale of indulgences, the payment of the *annates*, &c. Thus, a treaty which had been resisted by the public spirit of 1521 was seriously offered

to the French nation in 1817. This is perhaps the greatest blunder that has been committed by the French government since the restoration. The Pope, by the Concordat, divided France into dioceses, and appointed more than forty bishops, and nine arch-bishops, to whom considerable revenues were allotted; but the Chamber of Deputies, for the first time, held the purse. The catholic-apostolic-romish church was declared to be the "religion of the state." Would that state religion be intolerant? Certainly not, if the charter were observed. The phrase was probably not ill-intentioned, but it was obscure; and the obscurities of the court of Rome might cover things where "more was meant than met the ear." Nations are tired of those *ultra-montane* mysteries, those doubtful oracles, of which the ambiguous sense is sure to be accommodated to events. Bonaparte had said with precision, in *his* Concordat, that the catholic-apostolic-romish religion was professed by the great ma-

jority of French citizens. In general the constitutional government of the King has nothing to dread from comparison with that of Bonaparte ; in this point alone, the latter was more clear, which is of high importance in a question of religious liberty. In the preamble of the new Concordat, it is declared that the French government will occupy itself in concert with the Holy See in removing every obstacle to the execution of the laws of the church. It was asked with anxiety, what were these laws, and in what they consisted ? Was this religious code to be sought for in the Gospel, or in the dogmata of the catholic church ? Was it a Flechier or a Le Tellier, who was to instruct us in its application ? Every kind of meaning was to be found in this article ; religious liberty, and *dragonades*. It is well known that the popes arrogate a right, which no other prince assumes, of making secret protestations against public articles. If a pope were obliged to leave the word tolerance in a treaty, he

might afterwards assemble the secret consistory, and declare, that by *tolerance* in that place was meant *intolerance*. What might not the court of Rome discover in a Concordat, when it has perverted the sense of a text of the Gospel, into the motto of the inquisition?

A member of the Gallican church, one of the first preachers of the capital, ventured to publish a work in favour of the Concordat and its papal pretensions, so contrary to the spirit that always animated the French clergy, that some persons thought they perceived in this publication a desire to occupy a place in the sacred college, and become one of the heirs-apparent of the tiara. This ecclesiastic has for some time held religious conferences at Paris, that are much followed, in which he discusses the fundamental principles of the Christian religion. He carefully avoids controversy, having too much good sense to imitate a certain missionary, who, in a church of Paris, called upon Calvin to

answer; but Calvin making no reply, he exclaimed, "Since Calvin has nothing to say, let us pass on to another." M. L'Abbé *Traysinous*, in opening these conferences two years ago, enlarged with much eloquence upon a thought which has long taken possession of French minds, *marchons avec le siècle*. As the Abbé did not define his terms with precision, the assembly never suspected that the age with which they were to go on, was that of Francis I.

The fate of the Concordat of 1817 remains to be told. When it was presented by the ministers to the Chamber of Deputies, they heard themselves menaced with excommunication, without turning pale. The word excommunication, indeed, now preserves only a traditional respect even with catholics; and the Pope committed a great imprudence in excommunicating Bonaparte, who still continued every Sunday to hear mass, surrounded by cardinals.

The public opinion against the Concordat

was so unanimous, the cry so general throughout France, that it was never discussed. It was left to sleep in one of the Bureaux, where it still reposes. The bishops and archbishops, who were all named to their appointed sees, repose also, but less tranquilly, till funds are granted for their revenues. In the meantime their new dignities are altogether spiritual, and the possessors must live on hope, a slender nourishment for churchmen. The Pope waits also for the restitution of Avignon, or an equivalent in money; but he has small chance of either, and therefore, say the *Ultras*, there is no religion in France. His Holiness is much affected by these various disasters, to which however, the court of Rome is now sufficiently accustomed. It has indeed received so many wounds, that it may seem surprising it still survives. But happily for Rome the sovereigns of Europe believe themselves to be interested in its preservation; the popes also have their legitimacy.

LETTER X.

The Mandement—Literature—Science.

THE carnival of 1817 was succeeded by an incident that spread a general gaiety over the first days of Lent. This was a *Mandement*, or Pastoral Letter, of the *Grands Vicaires* of Paris, the first episcopal authority in the interregnum of the archbishoprick, addressed to the faithful, and affixed as usual, at that season, to the walls of all the churches of the capital. It was in general, in the accustomed forms, prescribing abstinence, granting permission to eat eggs, &c.—but it contained one prohibition of a novel description. A bookseller had just published a compact edition of Voltaire for more general use; and against this publication the *Mandement* hurled all its thunders. The Parisians have long had sufficient reason to be serious, but their natural disposition is to

be gay; they were glad of an occasion for mirth, and never was a Mandement before the cause of so much pleasantry. It furnished the subject of epigrams, the burden of songs; every body felt the ordinary disposition to do what was forbidden; and such was the increased demand for Voltaire, that seven new editions were published, and sold rapidly. These were followed by new editions of Rousseau, and other French classics, who now again descended from their shelves, and became for a moment, the order of the day. For it must be observed that the French are much less habitually occupied by literature than they were formerly. The truth is, that nothing now obtains the privilege of engrossing the public mind but politics. A new chef-d'œuvre of Racine would produce much less effect at present, than a new suggestion on the mode of elections. The long discussions on literature that used to animate French conversation have lost much of their interest. The works of the

great writers have been so minutely analysed, that every body knows by heart what ought to be said of their respective merits; and even those who are least capable of feeling their merit have learned enough to be sure of admiring in the right place.

Persons of taste, no doubt, can never become insensible to the charm of polite literature, the chosen delight of elegant minds, the soothing relief of that solitude to which the world leaves the unhappy, and the dearest resource against that weariness of life which sometimes besets the prosperous. But its voice is only heard at intervals amidst the turbulence of revolutions; other interests fire the brain, other thoughts seize the spirit. The French have been long travelling through paths where rocks lower on one side, and waves roll on the other; they may sometimes pause to gather a flower on the way, but its sweetness pleases only for a moment.

The time is past when the principal towns

of France were divided on the subject of a single letter in a line of Mithridate.* Such is the present avidity for political intelligence, that Paris is filled with reading-rooms, which are crowded from morning till night, with old and young, all alike eager to seize upon some new pamphlet, and obtain information of what is passing. At the *Athénée*, a long established literary institution, nothing attracts so brilliant a crowd of both sexes as the discussion of some political question by M. Benjamin Constant, with that analyzing precision, and that persuasive eloquence, of which he has so eminently the secret.

If the French have less inclination than formerly for the nice distinctions of criticism, the circumstances in which they have been placed by the revolution have led to a wider diffusion of general knowledge, a more extensive range of study, and a peculiar ardour

* *Tenois*, or *tenoit*, in the line,

“*Tenois* entre elle et moi, l’univers incertain.”

for the exact sciences, to which several causes have contributed. Geometry and mathematics have been studied profoundly on account of their connexion with military tactics. Shut out so long from the rest of the world, France was obliged to call science to her aid, in order to furnish her with the means of supplying, from her own resources, the productions she used to draw from other countries. Chemistry interrogated new substances, and formed new combinations of matter. She taught the art of producing soda from salt, and of extracting indigo from the blue of woad, and crystallized sugar from the juice of the beet-root. M. Berthollet did not disdain to teach the French how to dye their clothes, and M. Guyton Morveau how to bleach them; while M. Vauquelin has applied the most ingenious processes of chemical analysis to the uses of common life.

The sciences, thus allied to patriotism, and encircled with the splendour of eminent

names, form an essential part of modern education in this country; and that habit of study, which M. La Place calls *les delices des etres pensans*, is so little interrupted by political catastrophes, that the cannon which announced the approach of the allies towards Paris was heard at intervals by M. Gay-Lussac's auditors, while he was elucidating a beautiful series of experiments with that precision which distinguishes his investigations in every part of natural philosophy.

Nothing was better fitted to smooth the brow of war than the intercourse which took place, while it lasted, between the learned of France and England. It is happily now useless to inquire which was the blockaded country; but it is soothing to know that the *bulletins* of science passed regularly from one to the other.

Since the return of peace, the learned have combined their labours to attain definitively the dimensions and figure of this earth, at once so little and so great.

M. Biot read lately at the Institute an interesting account of his journey to the Shetland islands, in order to measure the meridian. The islanders erected a monument on the spot where he made his observations. Those "dwellers among the rocks" understood that he had performed something that deserved commemoration, and "the stone of his fame is placed." They were not like the Capuchin monk on the banks of the Orinoco, mentioned by M. de Humboldt, who "could not comprehend why he came so far to measure lands that were not his own." But M. de Humboldt's ardour for scientific discovery sometimes led him to regions beyond the pale of civilization, and where the inhabitants were too ignorant to be astonished at their guest.

LETTER XI.

Bible Society—Missionaries—Education.

THE same spirit of patriotism that has contributed to the improvement of science in this country, has also produced many new plans of general amelioration. The meaning of what we call public spirit in England, was never so well understood in France as at present; nor did the rich, at any former period, show themselves so disposed to become, what M. Le Montey calls “Les intendants des pauvres.” The royal family have contributed to bring charity into fashion. They are eminently beneficent. No man in Paris has more occupation than the secretary who distributes the alms of the Duchess of Angouleme.

A Bible society has lately been formed by the protestants, of which M. Jaucourt, a peer of France, is the president, and which our excellent ministers support with all their in-

fluence. We must long remain at a distance from the London Bible Society,* that glorious institution, of which the benevolent effects are diffused from where “the sun rises in the east, to where he goes down in the west;” but we bend before such divine philanthropy, and we shall learn to imitate what we admire.

The establishment of the Bible Society at Paris has been the object of a violent attack, in a periodical journal by the Abbé La Menais. He asserts that the Bible Society is the last effort of an expiring sect:—*que les sociétés bibliques sont des sociétés d'anarchie religieuse, qui mene à l'anarchie politique.—Est-ce que nous*

* The London Bible Society has lately put at the disposal of that of Paris a quantity of French Bibles that were at Bazil in Switzerland. The administrators of the French Custom-house ordered that these Bibles should pay no duty in passing the frontiers. The conduct of these administrators forms a contrast to the late instructions of the Pope to the catholics of Poland, forbidding them to read heretical Bibles.

n'avons pas assez des Jacobins, he exclaims, nous faut-il encore des puritains? Les fiers reformateurs de la religion Chretienne ne sa-voient pas eux-memes ce qui c'est que la religion—Luther n'a fait que changer l'unité de culte en une democratie d'opinions." * Such are the modest terms in which this Christian priest sends forth an act of accusation against a society which spreads abroad the Christianity of the Gospel in preference to that of the Church of Rome; but it is not by reading or by reason that such catholics qualify themselves for the interpretation of Christianity:—

“ Tout Chretien qui raisonne à le cerveau blessé,
Benissons les mortels qui n'ont jamais pensé.”

This attack of the Abbé La Menais on the Bible Society has been admirably repelled in

* “ Bible Societies are societies of religious anarchy, which lead to political anarchy. Is it because we have not Jacobins enough, that we must also have puritans? The audacious reformers of the Christian religion did not themselves know what religion is; and Luther did but change the unity of worship into a democracy of opinions.”

a letter published in the *Moniteur*, and written by M. Stapfer, formerly minister of public instruction in Switzerland, eminently distinguished by his intellectual endowments, and rare erudition, and no less for that pure and enlarged philanthropy which comprehends so many other virtues, and which is itself the dearest of them all.

It is a pleasure to relate that, although enlightened persons in France give no quarter to superstition, a general respect for religion now prevails in this country. No glory can any longer be acquired by the miserable boast of infidelity. In the first years of the revolution, those deplorable doctrines were so prevalent, that they had descended even to the vulgar. "*Il faut une religion pour le peuple,*" said a cobbler to his friend. At present the sneer of irreligion is as distant from the tone of good company, as it is from the principles of right reason. The infidel now bears his gloomy system as well as he can, in silence, and no longer obtrudes his incredulity on

others ; on those who, perhaps, in the bitterness of adversity, lean for their sole support on a creed that tells them of pity that partakes—of mercy that consoles, misfortune ; and of goodness that will remember virtue.

The French, become wiser and better from adversity, cherish a respect for religion ; but so far separated from bigotry, that some attempts which have been made to revive that spirit among the people have excited general indignation. Catholic missionaries are sent by nobody knows whom, to wander, nobody knows why, over France, with pilgrim-feet, and preach the dogmata of the catholic faith, as if they were as little known on the banks of the Garonne as of the Mississippi. They plant great iron crosses in the principal squares or streets of the towns or villages where they pass, and on which they engrave figures of hearts, inscribing on each heart the name of one of the faithful. These crosses become objects of idolatry to weak heads, who often form the majority ; and were Flechier now living, he

might be tempted to exclaim, as he did in the time of Louis XIV—“*Si Israel devient idolatre, je briserai le serpent d'arrain.*”

While the missionaries plant crosses, the Jesuits have attempted to form a few seminaries, in order to engraft their own principles and doctrines in the minds of the young, to raise up a nursery of new disciples, and re-assume the government of mankind. These *pères de la foi* (fathers of the faith), for such is the name they assume, long since banished by kings, abhorred by nations, covered with imprecations in Europe, and repulsed in Asia, have pitched their tent on the top of the Alps, invaded that *Champ d'Asyle* of liberty, and seem from thence to look down upon the world as if it were again their patrimony. But the times are past when these reverend fathers always attained the end they had in view. They have seminaries, but they are almost without pupils; and they find, even among their youthful disciples, a disposition to cast off the slavery of monkish rules.

The dynasty of the Jesuits is “gone to the family vault” of all dynasties founded on tyranny and fanaticism. Their principal church in Paris, still called *l'Eglise des Jesuites*, is but a few steps distant from our protestant temple. We may cast a glance on that magnificent edifice as we pass by, and smile at the present impotence of the race of its former possessors to do us evil. The archives of the Vatican, which were brought to Paris by the Pope, and which, next to the person of his Holiness, were among the greatest curiosities of the capital, contained the secret protestation of Pope Clement against the subversion of the order of the Jesuits. The protestation and the order are now alike harmless.

The youth of France would be indeed unfortunate if they were destined to wander in their studies from Scylla to Charybdis, from the education of a soldier to that of a monk, from the instruction of the military to that of the ecclesiastical Jesuit. For it would be

an error to suppose that Bonaparte's influence over the French youth began at the age of the conscription. Their military habits commenced at the *Lycées*. It has been observed that the great empire of priests over men may be well accounted for; for they take possession of them at their birth, and do not quit them till they die. Bonaparte profited by this example. He seized upon his subjects in their very childhood, nor loosened his hold of them during the short life they were suffered to lead, and which they were ultimately destined to sacrifice at his pleasure.

The university of Paris, which had the superintendence over the *Lycées*, became in effect a military establishment, the members of which were only distinguished by a variety of costume, the doctor's cap and gown being substituted for the helmet and uniform. The *Lycées*, under the guidance of these warlike professors, had been transformed into something like barracks. Parents who disapproved

of this martial instruction for their children, were denied, with a tyranny that did not hesitate to intrude into the most sacred privacies of domestic life, the privilege of placing them in other academies. The school-masters were obliged, by an order from the university, to drag their pupils twice a day, and at every season of the year, to a Lyceum, to receive their lessons. The children often lost their health, and always their time, by these journeys; but the *Lycées* were the headquarters where they were convened, and absence was punished as desertion.

The studies began by beat of drum; the boys were obliged to wear an uniform, and learn the exercise with a musket in their hand. The buildings of the *Lycées* were divided into quarters; every class had its corporal and serjeant; and the pupils were taught to salute by raising the hand to the forehead, instead of the *bourgeois* practice of pulling off the hat or bowing. The hall where they received their lessons had the air

of a camp, and they studied under arms. But this was not enough. While their bodies were moulded to military slavery, the glowing sentiments of freedom, inspired by classical learning, were carefully repressed in their minds. In the books adopted by the university, the antique virtues of Greek and Roman sages were proscribed or disfigured. Cato was stigmatized by the modern Cæsar, as a seditious fellow, who would have done better to have lived, and accepted the *croix d'honneur* of the times. When the boys had recourse to their dictionaries for epithets, or metaphors, they found a long article entitled NAPOLEO, containing, with many periphrases, his exploits in the north and the south; and where the eye reposed on twenty magnificent epithets, the *great*, the *valiant*, the *generous*, *invincible*, &c. applied to the said NAPOLEO. In this dictionary a certain people called BRITANNI were not forgotten; they were designated as *cruel*, *implacable*, *false*, with many other graceful appellations.

Thus the young students found a written law for their political opinions, which they had only to receive. Their priests, on one side, taught them a catechism, in which, not to honour Napoleon, was to incur eternal penalties; and their literary professors, on the other, showed them that, whatever might be his influence in heaven, he was the unquestionable master of the earth.

LETTER XII.

Recruiting Law.

THE Count D'Artois when he first set his foot on the soil of France, and answered the acclamations of the people by the flattering words, "*Il n'y a qu'un François de plus,*" told them at the same time, that the *droits reunis* and the conscription should be abolished. But these promises, poured forth in the enthusiasm of the moment, could not be fulfilled. France could not exist without soldiers, or without taxes. The *droits reunis* changed its name for that of *contributions indirectes*; and the conscription, that word at which every mother trembles, became the recruiting law.

Bonaparte, by his horrible mode of enforcing the conscription, had made all the women of France his enemies, and their influence being sufficiently powerful in this

country, their resentment, no doubt, contributed to his overthrow. Thus, with regard to the conscription, as Sieyes observed of the death of the Duke d'Enghien, he committed not merely a crime, but a blunder. Bonaparte had a great contempt for women; he suffered indeed his contempt for the whole human race to be too apparent, and that contempt led him into errors fatal to himself. He tried the endurance of mankind too far; his temper, his passions, were always impelling him forwards, and he wanted the sagacity to know where to stop. He had however, it must be allowed, good reason for not respecting mankind; he never beheld them but at his feet:

“ Je les vois à ses pieds baisser leur tête altiere;

Ils peuvent murmurer, mais c'est dans la poussiere.”*

He had seen men the most distinguished for their acquirements shrink at his glance; and he had found, amid a world of flatterers,

* Semiramis.

only one *Ducis*, who steadily rejected his proffered honours. In mentioning this last of the Romans, I ought not to forget, however, another poet, who refused to strike one chord of his lyre in praise of Napoleon when at the height of his power; while, in his pathetic lines on the royal family in exile, *Delille* became, what M. de Chateaubriant calls, with his usual beauty of expression, "*le courtisan de l'adversité.*" *

The fundamental principle of the conscription was established by the Constituant Assembly; the aristocratic party at that time opposed this law on account of its democratic principles. It bound every individual to serve his country, without exception or privilege. Advancement in military rank was also open to all, so that a private soldier, of which many honourable examples could be cited, might become a marshal of France. Bonaparte perverted the system of conscrip-

* The courtier of adversity.

tion, as he did every thing else, to the purposes of his own ambition. The principle of the conscription was just, but his application of it was odious and inhuman. When he wanted French troops, or, as the levy was then called, *chair-a-canon* (cannon-flesh), as soon as they had been voted by the senate,* he suffered not a moment to be lost. All means were lawful for the attainment of his end. In the latter part of his reign an internal warfare was vigorously carried on between him and the families of the conscripts before they departed, with all the arts of tyranny on one side, and of inventive tenderness on the other. At length every expedient failed. Even those who could felicitate themselves on some infirmity were compelled to go ; and those who had gold enough

* The senate has a long account to render to France of the successive generations of her youth who perished. The French nation might well address that senate in the words of Augustus, to Varus, " Give me back my legions."

to purchase a substitute, were forced to follow, in the *gardes d'honneur*, the persons by whom their situations were filled. Napoleon received graciously the addresses of the towns of France only when they were accompanied with a present. This gift usually consisted of two horsemen, armed, and equipped for the field. Rome, with her august head then prostrate, offered him her tribute of human sacrifices; and the eternal city seemed as ready at this epocha, as in the times described by Tacitus, to rush into servitude.

Bonaparte, having pursued the youth of France in every manner that could be devised, and so strained the law of conscription that scarcely a man was left to cultivate the ground, rural labours were performed by young women, sinking under toils beyond their strength, denied even that short-lived triumph which nature has annexed to the possession of youth and the power of beauty: wasted, weary, and forsaken, the glow of

health left their cheek, and the hopes of love were chilled in their bosoms.

But the immediate change wrought on the conscripts themselves was a subject of astonishment. Those very youths, who had left their paternal home, full of the tenderest emotions of domestic sorrow, in whose ears still vibrated the last farewell of their desolate parents, no sooner reached the army to which they had been dragged with reluctant steps, than they became new beings. Napoleon fixed his basilisk's eye upon them, and they were fascinated by his glance.

Bonaparte's presence excited no awe when he sat on his throne—he was even awkward in his gestures, as if he were not at his ease on a seat to which he was unaccustomed. It was in the field and on horseback that his small figure, in a plain coat, cast a spell about, which, under the walls of the Kremlin, and at the foot of the Pyramids, rendered danger delightful, and death unheeded. A

friend of mine, attached to the minister of foreign affairs, who always followed Napoleon to the army, told me he saw him, the day after a great battle, pass through a field that led to his head-quarters, and which was covered with wounded and dying soldiers. As he went by, they suspended their groans, and cried *Vive l'Empereur!* He did not vouchsafe to answer even by a look, but strode over heaps of dead bodies with the same indifference that he would have done over any ordinary obstacle. It is true that when misfortune, with its usual effect on a hard heart, had augmented his natural obduracy, he received occasional hints from his soldiers that they grew tired of being slaughtered. On approaching his tent after one of the battles fought near Paris, he found the entrance barred by a pile of dead bodies heaped against the door. But how seldom did his armies betray a feeling of reproach. How devotedly did those who had survived the retreat of Moscow again rally round his

standard. They had not indeed forgotten the frozen path of the desert ; and although they scorned to complain, little circumstances sometimes served to show the impressions that were left on their minds. I remember at that time a poor man was taken ill at the gate of the hotel where I lived ; he complained of extreme faintness, and was supplied with food. " What a clamour," said a young officer just returned from Moscow, with a look of bitterness, " what a clamour does that fellow make about a little hunger ; I have seen hundreds expire of want and say nothing." The road of the French army from Moscow was strewed with bags of silver, and even of gold, which their exhausted owners could carry no further ; gold was useless where bread was not to be purchased ; and man, contending at once with the wants of nature and the fury of the elements, must have felt all his littleness.

Whither has the conscription led me ? But are not the words conscription and Bona-

parte interwoven inseparably together? Let me add another observation before I part with him again. His power of exciting attachment was limited to his soldiers. In the midst of his last military pomp at the *Champ de Mai*, while the soldiers who felt that they were the heroes of the fête rent the air with acclamations, the ranks of the national guard passed before him in dignified silence. His own countenance indeed was not calm; he appeared to be agitated, and perhaps felt some presentiment that the splendour which then surrounded him was the farewell ray of his glory. The armies of Europe accelerated his fall, but his sentence was already pronounced by the French nation; nothing remained to him but soldiers and cannon. The last years of his reign somewhat resemble that part of the *Iliad* where the poet suspends his narrative, and fills a whole book with an enumeration of the forces and description of the arms of the Grecian hosts.

But let us return to the recruiting law. It

was essential under a representative government to conciliate the necessity of raising an army, with the principles of justice and the charter. It was also indispensable to have a numerous army. Bonaparte, who thought there could never be too many combatants in the world, had taught Europe to collect immense masses of men. The system of voluntary service was first tried by the new government, but it was found insufficient for the attainment of the end desired; and a law was passed, obliging all the youth of France who had attained their twentieth year, to enter the military service during five years. The recruits were then at liberty to return to their families; advancement was open to all; the number of men required was irrevocably fixed, and a small portion only being at first wanted, they drew lots for their departure. Many circumstances gave a right to be relieved from service, and the whole temper of the law was mild and benignant; for which Marshal Gouvion St. Cyr received the bless-

ing of many a parent. Upon the whole, this constitutional law, if it were not obeyed with enthusiasm, was submitted to with resignation. It was conscription, but conscription stripped of its horrors—the lion had lost his teeth and claws ; there was nothing Imperial in his look ; he had no weapons of attack, but was still a lion for defence.—The deputies of the *côté droit* succeeded in obtaining exemption from service for the young men who devote themselves to *primary instruction*, and who are known by the name of *Freres des Ecoles Chretiennes*, commonly called *Freres Ignorantins*. These remains of a monastic institution are brought forward in opposition to the schools of mutual instruction, and have the special support of the *Ultras*. More than eighty thousand children in France attend the schools of mutual instruction ; they increase every day, and knowledge becomes more and more plebeian. The *Freres Ignorantins* have therefore a very scanty number of pupils, to whom however they are bound

to devote themselves for ten years, under pain of being obliged, if they throw off the gown, to buckle on the cuirass.

One cause, however, of great discontent respecting military affairs still exists. The Swiss regiments, who form a part of the army, and of the King's guard, are the objects of general aversion. They have higher pay than the French troops, and their scarlet uniforms, their German dialect, and their foreign mien, gave them the appearance to the French of a permanent army of occupation. The people pretend that these Swiss soldiers have nothing French about them but their cockades ; and that the King of France is a thousand times better guarded by the constitutional charter, than by all the troops of Helvetia. The King, whose philosophy keeps pace with the times, whose conduct has given him such high claims to the affections of the nation, has certainly no need of foreign troops, an attribute of that despotism which he has renounced for ever.

The King in 1815 adopted a very popular measure in the dismissal of the companies of *Mousquetaires*, red, and grey. Whatever colour they wore, the name of *Mousquetaires*, unknown in the vocabulary of the revolution, and which leads the ideas back as far as Louis XV, and the court of the Regent, was highly obnoxious to the French. Those masked warriors, whom Shakspeare calls *popinjays*, clad in their splendid uniforms, with their long hair flowing in careful curls on their shoulders, balancing themselves gracefully on their well-trained horses, as richly caparisoned as themselves, were in striking contrast with our former acquaintance, the *vieille garde* and their bushy whiskers. The King dismissed the *Mousquetaires*, retained only a small portion of the *Gardes-du-corps*, and ordered a royal guard to be formed. It was composed in 1815, and bears the stamp of its date in its heterogeneous materials. Soldiers from La Vendée, and soldiers of Bonaparte, were crowded rather too closely toge-

ther ; all perhaps better troops than citizens, and, like the military of every country, able to produce more certificates of valour, than of civism. Indeed he who, with a sabre at his side, can make the law, is not always in a humour to submit to it. The *bourgeois* of Paris, in their Sunday rambles to the neighbouring villages, have often occasion to complain of the excesses of the military. The soldiers sometimes forget they are at home, and after taking too copious libations, pay their reckoning, as if they were in a conquered country, with a stroke of their sabre.

“ They carve at the meal
With gloves of steel,
And they drink the red wine through the helmet barred.” *

These irregularities, however, diminish daily ; the skirmishes in the public houses become less frequent, and the French soldier, naturally a gay and social being, while he

* Scott.

hangs on the trophied wall of his cottage, his *croix d'honneur*, the proud certificate of valour, will learn the sweetness of domestic affections, and the pleasures that belong to peace. The French army is now rising from its ashes; the soldiers enroll themselves in the new levies, and the officers on half-pay, who from their numbers form an army of their own, have been invited to accept commissions in the new military organisation, and to be reconciled to their country, but too proud of their valour.

The French are ready to allow the truth of all the fine sayings on the folly of military ambition; but every Frenchman has a feeling lurking at his heart, that impels him to shelter himself from the humiliation of a conquered capital under the laurels of Austerlitz and of Jena.

LETTER XIII.

Catholic Processions.

THE protestants of the south, now sheltered by the constitutional government, again enjoy security. But Nismes is become a mournful residence. All intercourse of society has ceased between the catholics and protestants. A wall of separation seems raised between them, and they form two distinct communities.

Persecution has produced its usual effects, in leading the protestants to a more solemn observance of every religious duty, with a more fervid zeal, and a more steadfast devotedness to that faith, to which they have borne witness in the hour of peril, and which they have once more sealed with their blood.

Since the period of the persecution, they have felt some evils, comparatively slight in-

deed, but sufficient to excite discontent. One of those causes of complaint has been the renewal of catholic processions.

A church is a public edifice into which no person is compelled to enter, but where all who are present ought to behold the rites that are celebrated, with at least the external marks of respect, or to withdraw. But this obligation, which regards the ceremonies of worship *within* the churches, is transformed into an act of oppression, when the priests, quitting their temples, and extending the limits of their domain, bear their pomp, their incense, and their sacrifices, along the public streets, and force citizens of every different persuasion to join the ceremonies of one; to uncover the head, and sometimes to bend the knee; and compel the inhabitants of every house which the procession passes to spread tapestry along the front in honour of it.

The predilection of the catholic clergy for processions may be traced to their desire of compelling universal homage;—and what

surer means of obtaining it than by rearing altars on the high-way, and obliging the passers-by to a tacit observance, at least, of the rites they celebrate? Catholic worship in general is addressed peculiarly to the imagination;—its priests speaking, like those of Hindostan, a language unintelligible to the multitude,—its mysterious symbols, its music, and the variety of garments in which the priests are enveloped,—are all calculated to seize and amuse the fancy; but nothing is more fitted than the pomp of processions to fix the attention of the people, to whom it is easier to gaze than to reason, and who involuntarily respect what is marshalled with order, and moves on with solemnity.

The clergy, on the renewal of these ceremonies, which had not been celebrated at Paris during more than twenty years, were desirous, by a profuse exhibition of all their church ornaments, to display a magnificence worthy of the antique splendour of the religion of the state: nature herself too, on such

occasions, is required to contribute her aid ; and who can decorate a fête so well ? The altars raised in the public street are nearly concealed by roses, and the streets are covered with verdure, which is gently trodden by white-veiled nymphs, chanting choral melodies ; weeping Magdalens, with dishevelled hair ; and little St. Johns, with folds of drapery, graceful and light as Cupids.

But nothing is more remarkable on these occasions than the exhibition of relics, supposed to have been long since destroyed by sacrilegious hands, in the fury of the revolution. They seem to have arisen from their ashes, and those especially of St. Louis have all re-appeared with documents authenticating their genuineness.

But if the catholic clergy exulted in the renewed exercise of their ceremonies, the protestants were in no humour to follow their triumphal car. While submission was voluntary, they had indeed often practised, in a spirit of compliance, what they now deter-

mined to resist as an obligation imposed on them. Bonaparte had joined with the Concordat of 1801, a series of legislative ordinances, which he thought proper to call the organic laws of religious worship, and which regulated the police of many details that had not found place in the Concordat. These organic laws, however, comprehended some objects which the Pope considered as of high importance, and which, having been promulgated without his consent, he hastened to protest against, as wanting his sanction. He made these protestations *in petto*, reserving to himself the faculty of producing them when Napoleon should cease to be the most powerful. His Holiness has since published these secret protestations, declaring that the additional articles are null and without effect. They have, however, still the force of laws, being sanctioned by the Charter and the national will. The Pope still continues to interfere in French affairs; but it is an idle pretence merely. One article of the organic

laws declares, that no external catholic ceremony can take place in a town where there is a protestant consistory. In consequence of this article, no procession ever appeared in Paris; for no class of Frenchmen had more fully imbibed the lesson of passive obedience taught by Napoleon, than the catholic clergy. Submission to his Imperial will seemed to be the first dogma of their faith.

In some provincial towns, at that period, the protestant consistories, in a spirit of religious fraternity, made known to the catholic magistrates, that they would not oppose the ceremony of the processions, provided that, towards the protestants, the most perfect liberty of conscience were observed. Processions, therefore, took place in some provincial towns, and, though forbidden by the law, were permitted by the magistrates; and they served to prove the harmony and good understanding that existed between the two communions. The prefect pleased the people, without being perhaps much pleased

himself, by following the hallowed canopy on foot, in its circuit through the town, dressed in his costume of ceremony, and decorated with all the insignia of his office.

At that time also, when the sick stood in need of extreme unction, the host was often carried through the streets, accompanied by a little bell; and every catholic who joined the procession escaped so many days of purgatory. But if a protestant passed by, he took off his hat, or kept it on, as he pleased; no remark was made, because no offence was presumed. The days were past when the Kings of France, on meeting such a procession, descended from their carriages, and kneeled down on the pavement while it passed.

Soon after the restoration, the protestants, in almost every part of France, received orders from the magistrates to spread tapestry against the walls of their houses, when the procession of the *fête-Dieu* passed by. These orders were in general indignantly received:

complaints and remonstrances were made against such unconstitutional ordinances, and they often met with a steady refusal of compliance; which refusal was expiated by fines and imprisonment. In some villages, composed almost entirely of protestants, the great majority of the inhabitants were compelled to adorn their dwellings for a catholic festival, in which a few only took part. But submission was far less general than resistance. A protestant who inhabited a town near Montpellier, and who, from a sort of civility towards his catholic neighbours, had the habit of decorating his house every year for the procession, received an order from the mayor to that purpose, which he answered by declaring, that from that moment he would never hang up tapestry again. In the department of the Arriege, fines were imposed on sixty inhabitants of the village of Calvet, for not having hung up tapestry, by a judgment which declared, as the reason of the infliction of the penalty, that the catholic religion was recog-

nized by the charter to be the religion of the state. This hamlet touches the village of Carlat, the name of which is become historical as the birth-place of the celebrated Bayle. The inhabitants proudly show his house and his chamber. That great man did not foresee that, in 1818, intolerance would penetrate into that peaceful country. Those villages, where strangers are received with antique hospitality, are placed at the foot of the Pyrennees, in the midst of the most solemn and most majestic scenery. The inhabitants still show the cavern, situated in the vicinity, where their forefathers took refuge during the persecutions of Louis XIV.

Several consistories assembled to deliberate on the conduct they ought to observe, and were unanimously of opinion that the obligation of hanging up tapestry for catholic festivals was contrary to that liberty of conscience which was guaranteed by the charter. At length one consistory sent an official letter to the minister of the interior at that pe-

riod, demanding an explicit declaration on this matter. The answer was ill calculated to calm the disquietudes of the protestants. It was observed that the spreading tapestry on the walls of their houses was a slight mark of deference paid to the religion of the state, and that the order to do so must be considered as a measure of the police. Sanctioned by this official opinion, fines and imprisonments were multiplied ; for resistance kept pace with injustice. At length this state of indecision and violence was terminated by the noble perseverance of a protestant in the common cause.

M. Roman, a rich merchant at Lourmarin, was fined six francs for having refused to hang up tapestry on his house. He appealed to a higher tribunal, and that tribunal confirmed the sentence against him. But perseverance is inspired by nothing so much as by the consciousness of a good cause. M. Roman prosecuted his appeal before the Tribunal of Cassation, which is the supreme

tribunal of France. The protestants awaited the decision with anxious expectation. The cause was pleaded admirably by a young advocate of eminent abilities, M. Odillon Barrot, in the name of religious liberty, and under the banner of the charter, by which that liberty is formally recognized. After a long deliberation, the tribunal pronounced a memorable sentence, which annulled the decision of the inferior courts, and decided that the municipal magistrates had no right to oblige the protestants to hang tapestry on their houses. What rendered this sentence more remarkable was, that it extended even to the catholics, by declaring that any act or ordinance of a mayor or prefect, that was not conformable to the dispositions of the law prescribed in the charter, was null, and without effect. But the history of intolerance, and of M. Roman, is not yet closed. The Court of Cassation, in annulling the decision of a former court, sent the cause, as usual, to be again tried by another. The tribunal

of Aix in Provence, where it was sent, has, it appears, other ideas of toleration, and other interpretations of the law, than the Tribunal of Cassation, and M. Roman is once more condemned, but not discouraged. He has again appealed to the Tribunal of Cassation; and the final sentence will soon be passed with solemnity, by the four united sections of that supreme court, over which the *Garde des sceaux* will preside.

LETTER XIV.

Aix-la-Chapelle.

THE Congress which was to decide the great question, whether the armies of occupation were, or were not to quit the French territory, at length assembled at Aix-la-Chapelle. A general anxiety pervaded all ranks of people throughout France; the moment of suspense appeared intolerable; and as usual, that admirable virtue, patience, became exhausted when most wanted. Every day the public disquietude increased; the Congress was reproached with being too dilatory, and the telegraph of moving too slow.

It was indeed believed that certain individuals had addressed a secret note to the allied powers, filled not only with apprehensions of the danger arising from the departure of their troops, but even proposing that that departure should be indefinitely post-

poned. The sovereigns of Europe however, it was hoped, knew too well the temper of France to accept the invitation.

Every eye was now turned towards the frontier; the functions of moral life seemed suspended; and every thought was concentrated in one great inquiry, Will they go, or stay? It was no ordinary intelligence that was expected; it was not the loss or the gain of a battle; but tidings intimately connected with the most sacred public affections: it was the desire to learn the termination of a national disgrace which had lasted three years; it was anxiety to know whether the allies would have the good sense to avoid drawing France into a conflict in which her very existence would be the prize; and forcing her into an unnatural position, in which every sentiment of justice disappears, when the moral nature of man gives place to the ferocity of despair, and when every means of warfare is thought to be good, provided it be destructive. Have

we not seen, in Spain, every hamlet become a fortress, every ditch a redoubt, and every human being a soldier?

Those imprudent dispatches from Paris to Aix-la-Chapelle, which, as I have observed, were thought to have occasioned that suspense which the Parisians found so difficult to endure, were in part founded on the effect produced on the public mind by the recent elections. Persons who held important offices in the state, men of good intentions but narrow views, had in their communications expressed their fears of the democratic complexion of the elections: even the ministry, at the head of which was the Duke de Richelieu, had already conceived some alarm. But though it was acknowledged that they who had a right to make the partition of Europe must have an equal right to watch over it, yet the French thought that their elections were *une affaire de menage*, with which foreign potentates had no concern, or in which at least they ought not to interfere.

But the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle was not an ordinary assemblage of independent powers. France was there called to the bar of Europe, and the verdict was about to be pronounced. At that awful and decisive moment, these groundless fears and apprehensions were brought forward. They were perhaps, in part, the scruples of good men; but every thing in them was mischievous, except the intention. The ministers of the allied sovereigns held the pen in their hands to sign the emancipation of France, and the signature was suspended. Something, it is said, in the shape of a conditional promise to modify the mode of elections, and to guard against the sins of democracy, was at length given on the part of the French minister; the treaty was then signed, and the ransom was paid, while the conquerors of France held, like Brennus, their sword in the balance.

The allied armies now turned their faces towards the frontiers; the fortified towns of

France received French garrisons; and the Emperor of Russia, and the King of Prussia, travelled from Aix-la-Chapelle to Paris, with a kind of chivalrous politeness, to leave their cards of "*P. P. C.*" with the King of France.

The French were no longer prisoners in their own land; the cup of humiliation, which was full, had not been suffered to overflow; and they hailed their emancipation with transport, but in silence; for all public rejoicings were avoided, as unbecoming the national dignity.

Nature seemed also to be in sympathy with man, and decorated France with lavish gifts for the festival of deliverance. The harvest had been abundant beyond the hopes of the husbandman, and the vintage crowned with gay profusion this season of gladness. All was in strong and delightful contrast with the gloomy horror of the preceding year. The corn had been destroyed by incessant rains, and the half-famished peasants, unable to find either employment or bread, flocked

in crowds to Paris, demanding alms in the streets, in a tone of importunity that told the passer-by to beware of refusal.

But sedition and hunger, humiliation and despair, were all forgotten together in the joys of this auspicious moment. The husbandman no longer saw the tent of the stranger pitched in his field; and was no longer compelled to furnish subsistence for men who expressed their desires, or their discontent, in strange accents, and a confusion of tongues, all to him equally unintelligible. It was not an easy task to satisfy the variety of tastes and inclinations of guests who arrived, some from the Caspian mountains, and others from the Scotch Highlands.

Wine was not, like the preceding year, wanting to fill the empty casks, but casks were wanting for the wine. The comet of 1811 had been supposed by the people to have had an influence upon the wine of that year, which was excellent, and has ever since been called the *wine of the comet*.

It was surpassed by the vintage of 1818, which is believed to have felt the influence of a more propitious star ; it has taken the name of the “ *vin du depart* ;” and the abundant vintage was celebrated in many a song, the burden of which was, the delightful certainty that the allies would not drink of it.

LETTER XV.

Proposal to change the Law of Elections.

ALL was tranquil in France. The departure of the allies, far from letting loose the hostile factions, and giving scope to new disorders, had furnished additional guarantees to public security. The assembled chambers were peaceably occupied in the discharge of their important functions; and the King and the nation seemed, under the tutelar influence of the charter, to have contracted stronger ties towards each other.

The provisional laws of 1815 were now drawing towards a close. The exiles, who had been banished without trial, were successively suffered to return, and had learned during their wanderings, to appreciate the blessedness of home.*

* The affecting grief of one of my old friends, who was forced to depart, often reminded me of that beau-

Amidst these promises of public felicity, the scene suddenly changed. Clouds and darkness gathered over the political horizon, and civil wars seemed about to fill up the void which the armies of occupation had left.

It appears that M. de Richelieu, on his return from Aix-la-Chapelle, was persuaded of the necessity of changing the law of elections; M. Laines had long entertained the same persuasion. The other ministers, and particularly M. de Cazes, were of a different opinion, and it became necessary that a ministry thus divided should be changed.

tiful passage of Atala, "Oh! que de larmes sont repandues, lorsqu'on abandonne ainsi la terre natale, lorsque du haut de la colline de l'exil, on decouvre pour la derniere fois le toit où l'on fut nourri, et la fleuve de la cabane, qui continue de rouler tristement à travers les champs solitaires de la patrie!" How many tears are shed by the exile, when he thus abandons his native soil; when, from the top of an eminence, he looks back for the last time on the paternal roof in which he was nourished, and the cottage-stream which continues to flow mournfully through the deserted fields of his country!

A new ministry was formed under the influence of the *Ultras* within and without, fitted to renew the good times of 1815. They succeeded in obtaining the dismissal of M. de Cazes, during forty-eight hours, and exulted on seeing the object of their immortal hatred quit the helm of government. But to their great discomfiture his Excellency went out by one door, only to come in by another. The *Ultras* believed themselves masters of the place when the ministry of the police was abolished; but how short was the delusion when, a few hours after, they beheld M. de Cazes minister of the interior, in the place of M. Laines, on whom they leaned for support; an excellent man, but not free from faults as a minister; and who lost, in defending the *Ultras*, the popularity he had acquired in opposing them. Yet his country would be ungrateful indeed, were it to forget the noble struggle he once maintained against imperial despotism: to have

resisted Napoleon on his throne was no ordinary virtue.

The ephemeral ministry of forty-eight hours was followed by an interregnum of some days, during which, public affairs went on as well as they could without any ministry at all. At length a constitutional ministry was formed, which still maintains its station, and whose conduct, in the crisis to which we are hastening, has inspired the most honourable confidence in the public mind.

M. Laines took his place in the chamber of deputies in the ranks of the *coté droit*, and M. de Richelieu soon after left Paris for the south of France. Previously to his departure he had been the subject of a warm discussion in the two chambers. The government had proposed to the legislature to confer on him a national recompense for the services he had rendered the country in his negotiations with foreign powers. This proposal met with a

vigorous opposition in the Chamber of Deputies, and was generally disapproved of by the public. Although M. de Richelieu was deservedly esteemed, and ample justice was rendered to his private character, yet it was remembered that he had weathered the storm of the revolution, not in struggling against its violence, but at a safe distance on the shores of the Black Sea. Emigration is an offence which France, in her injustice, never quite forgives. The French admit that it was death for the higher classes of society to stay, and yet they are inclined to think that it was a crime to go.

But, independently of the personal merits or demerits of the Duke of Richelieu, it was considered as highly impolitic to commemorate in a public and solemn manner the events in which he had acted a part, which, however well performed, led only to humiliating recollections. It was his misfortune to have signed that treaty, so deplorable for France, which resigned her territory to be occupied by

foreign armies. He had indeed also signed the treaty of liberation; but even that treaty was of a nature to be received only in complacent silence. If the Romans thanked their general after a defeat, for not having despaired of the country, they did not select that occasion to confer on him the laurel crown. M. de Richelieu had carried to Aix-la-Chapelle the ransom of France, and to bestow a national recompense at such a moment was to erect a monument of disgrace.

The grant of land was however voted, but it was by a very small majority; and it was immediately transferred by M. de Richelieu, with great dignity, to his native town of Bordeaux.

A new crisis was now approaching for France. Strange rumours that prognosticated evil, like the hollow sounds that precede the earthquake, were heard. It was known that the oligarchic party meditated a new attack on the constitutional monarchy.

Alas! it would seem as if there were no *Champ-d'Asyle* for liberty in France, ever persecuted by the most opposite factions, who, in whatever else they differ, are therein agreed.

The most important point of the new constitution is that which regulates the election of deputies to the chamber; and political education is sufficiently advanced in France to have inspired an unbounded veneration for a national representation, and an inflexible determination never to relinquish the sacred rights of election. To attack that law was to wound the vital principle of the constitution. The *Ultras* had long repented, in sackcloth and ashes, their imprudent assent to this popular law, and it appears indeed a matter of astonishment that they suffered it to pass. By expressing our wonder however we explain nothing; but strange and mysterious things sometimes happen in the moral as well as in the physical world. Perhaps that party hoped to govern the elections, and

found too late, that it would be as easy to give a direction to the waves of the ocean.

The agent of whom the party made choice to bring forward this disastrous proposition was M. de Barthelemy, born a commoner, but who had been one of the kings of France when it was governed by five directors, and who is now a peer of the realm. M. de Barthelemy is a man irreproachable in his morals, and he had at one period a claim to pity, for he was persecuted; but he was not fitted by nature to act a part in the political world, and has been dragged into notice by circumstances. He was always of a timid character, and has now attained that advanced age, when timidity and caution become a part of our nature, since in our passage through life we have usually learned at least one sad lesson, that of mistrust. M. de Barthelemy nevertheless consented to be the organ of a measure from the consequences of which the most daring might have shrunk; and this he did, not from strength of

mind, but from weakness. He paused, he hesitated, he trembled before the proposal he was about to adopt; but he was importuned into submission, he was compelled by entreaties, and he had not the firmness to resist. This was not all; it is pretended that M. de Barthelemy was urged on by certain men to whom this attack was an affair of conscience. It is said that, having confessed the scandal of their past political principles, their former republican errors, to some learned cardinals, those holy personages declared that nothing less than an attack on the law of elections could save men who had suffered themselves to be seduced by the pestilential influence of the nineteenth century. Heretofore a crusade against infidels would have been required in expiation; what was now exacted was a crusade against the *Liberaux*. Cardinals have not yet ceased to descend into the political arena; and the sacred college is still at war with every new institution. Liberty will ever be considered by the court of

Rome as an heresy, and even when she says nothing, her silence means a protestation.

M. de Barthelemy, assailed, and almost driven into the tribune by his noble friends, at length "bound up his nature to the feat," and brought forward his proposal, for praying the King to present to the Chambers such modifications of the law of elections as his Majesty should deem indispensable. This proposition was so vague, so ill-defined, comprehended so much, and explained so little, that it was evident the attack was directed not against any specific article but the law itself.

M. de Cazes, immediately after M. de Barthelemy had ceased speaking, arose and declared that he considered the proposal as the most fatal that had been heard in that Chamber. The motion was also combated with great force by M. Desolles, president of the council of ministers; he showed the danger of the measure, expressed his conviction of the excellence of the law of elections, and

ended by declaring that such was the unanimous opinion of the government. The proposal was warmly opposed in the Chamber of Peers, by several nobles of ancient family; by the Duke de Broglie, the Coryphæus of the *Liberaux*, the Dukes of Rochfoucault, Choiseul, and others. This proposed invasion of the rights of the nation was also opposed with energy by M. Lanjuinais, a veteran, I had almost said a martyr, in the cause of liberty; who shared in all the dangers of the Gironde, and, happily for his country, escaped their fate.

M. de Barthelemy's proposal was defended by several of Napoleon's counts and barons, with the vehemence which belongs to those who are received into a new sect. M. de Fontanes gave the support of his elegant and classical style to the motion; he is said to be the partizan of power from conviction, and has been called the metaphysician of despotism.

M. de Barthelemy, and the peers who

ranged themselves on his side, were repeatedly called upon to explain their motives for this alarming innovation; but they seemed as little disposed as Falstaff, to “give a reason on compulsion.” They at length specified one abuse relative to patents,* which, when paid for to a certain amount, give the commercial part of the community the right of voting, and which it was pretended had been perverted for the purpose of multiplying votes. This accusation was clearly and victoriously refuted. Something was also said of the electoral colleges being incomplete; that seldom more than two thirds of the electors were present, which showed that there was some vice in the law. But it was proved that this objection could be applied only to the first elections that had taken place; when some electors, living at a distance from the

* These patents are in the nature of licences granted to individuals to exercise professions and trades: being paid for, they constitute a species of direct taxation on the commercial and industrious classes.

place of election, and not sufficiently penetrated with the importance of their functions, had abstained from going, believing perhaps, that they did no injury to their country by staying at home.

It is certain that in the last elections this civic apathy disappeared, and was succeeded by a patriotic zeal so fervent, that several electors in the departments, who were sick, caused themselves to be carried a considerable distance, in sedan chairs, to the place of election ; and, rather than abdicate their share of sovereignty, exerted their right of voting, in their night-caps. At Paris the colleges had been full in proportion as the elections were contested. Thus when M. Ternaux, one of the candidates for Paris, supported, in spite of himself, by the ministers, the prefect, the *gens-d'armes*, the writers of hand-bills, &c. was balloted for against M. Benjamin Constant, supported only by the *Liberaux*, nearly ten thousand electors gave their votes, which is a considerable number for Paris.

Were I to describe the consternation which M. de Barthelemy's proposal excited in Paris, it would seem like exaggeration. An important motion in the English Parliament awakens public attention; but in that country, seated on its rock, can only have an indirect, and perhaps remote influence on individual interests. Here the connexion of a great political question with the welfare of private life, is immediate and overwhelming: The day after that fatal motion, the public funds, which we are now learning to esteem, but which, having often known them nearly annihilated, nobody trusts too far, fell precipitately. They had already suffered from certain negotiations and speculations that took place upon the departure of the allies, but M. de Barthelemy gave them the *coup-de-grace*. The stability of the commercial world was fearfully shaken, and many private fortunes were consequently overthrown. It is true indeed that, in France, people are accustomed to be ruined. The revolution, queen of all earthly

reverses, has taught us great practical philosophy with respect to changes of fortune, which are supported here with the same sort of resignation as if they happened from physical causes, some deviation of nature, some shock of the elements. The evil has been too general in the different phases of our history, to be felt as a disgrace, or even to furnish a claim to pity.—But, to return to public disasters: The motion obtained a majority in the Chamber of Peers of more than forty votes. This was not all; a financial measure of great importance had just passed in the Chamber of Deputies, and was sent to the peers, by whom it was rejected without even obtaining the honours of a discussion.

The peers being now in the humour of rejection, it was difficult to foresee how far they might indulge that propensity. It might extend even to the budget, and the ministers no doubt felt that they could as little exist without funds, as the nation without rights. The evil became pressing, it required a violent

remedy, and fifty-four new peers were named.

This vigorous measure was compared to the ordinance of the 5th of September, 1816, which dissolved the Chamber of Deputies. Both ordinances were directed against the same party, who, in 1815, prevailed in the lower chamber, and in 1819, in the upper. This act of royal authority was warmly applauded by all but the majority of the peers. They saw, too late, that all they had gained by their imprudent attempt was to have cemented the ties that bound the King and the nation together; to have separated themselves from the rest of France; and, what was most intolerable (for what is so intolerable as the humiliations of vanity?), their own importance was diminished by the accession of so large a body of new peers.

Outcries were heard, and protestations were meditated; but it was at length sullenly recognised that the King had only exerted an incontestable prerogative of his crown. The

titles and documents of the new peers were laid before this complacent assembly, and nothing was left to do but to beg the new members would take their seats.

LETTER XVI.

The same subject continued.—Conclusion.

AMONG the new-created peers some had been members of that chamber in 1814, after the first entrance of the King, and had kept their places during the short accession of Bonaparte in 1815. We may imagine what were the resentments of the oligarchic party, who perceive nothing legitimate in France but themselves, on being obliged to admit into their corps men who, for the most part, were never before inscribed in any record of heraldry. The names of some of the new peers, who were Marshals of France, were indeed known, but only in its modern history; and Bonaparte had contrived to conceal their claims to celebrity by veiling them under pompous titles; but they now found that he had conferred on them a benefit, since the services of the General were forgiven in

favour of the dignities of the Duke. This however did not always happen ; and an ancient noble having inquired, somewhat contemptuously, of a new peer what his sumptuous habit had cost him, he answered sternly *forty battles*, and turned his back on the inquirer.

M. de Barthelemy, meeting one of the new peers lately in the *anti-sallon* of a palace, begged him to pass first. *Non, Monsieur le Marquis*, said the new peer, stepping back, *je sais trop ce que je vous dois*.

M. de Barthelemy's motion was now discussed in the Chamber of Deputies. The peers foresaw its fate, and deplored its existence. Its inventors were ashamed of their invention. The motion was treated like a thing fallen into adversity, and which consequently all the world abandons.

M. Lafitte, a zealous defender of the constitution, had proposed in the Chamber of Deputies, to present an address to the King, praying that no change might be made in the

law of election. The ministers opposed this measure, preferring that the proposal should be transmitted by the peers to the deputies, and rejected by that chamber.

All France waited in anxiety the issue of this great discussion. Petitions were sent to the Chamber from all parts against the motion, and served to show the feeling of the public mind. They were very ill received by the *Ultras*, who have a particular aversion to the right of petition, where complaint becomes a privilege, and redress a duty.

The debate on this motion, in the Chamber of Deputies, was sustained with ability proportioned to its importance. M. de Villele, a leader of the *côté droit*, in order to give additional weight to his arguments in favour of the motion, imprudently observed, that in one department six hundred more electors were found in 1818 than in 1815, and that such a difference could only be explained by some vice in the law. M. de Villele touched a cord which had some sad vibrations. M.

de St. Aulaire, member of the department of the Gard, arose and declared, that it was his department that was meant, and that he would explain to the Chamber the cause of the augmentation of votes. "All France," he said, "knew that there were more electors in 1818 than in 1815; but all France," he added, "does not perhaps know that in 1815 thirteen protestant electors were murdered in their way to the Electoral College!" At these words the most violent emotion manifested itself in the assembly;—a general movement of horror was visible on every countenance;—the veil was thus lifted up in the sight of all France, which had covered that department, "still humid with blood," to use the words of M. Moutin de Gray. M. de Serres, the *Garde des sceaux*, confirmed the testimony of M. de St. Aulaire. He unfolded the crimes that had proceeded from the fury of political vengeance;—he declared that the assassins of the protestants, and of General la Garde, had escaped all punish-

ment, by the influence of a party, which had left no effort untried in order to save even the assassins of Rhodéz from the stroke of the law. The speech of M. de Serres, admirable for its eloquence, and no less remarkable for its noble frankness and sincerity—new virtues in a minister—produced the most powerful effect on the Chamber, and all France has resounded with honest acclamations. M. de Serres will bear a proud name in the French annals of 1819.

M. de Barthelemy's motion was rejected by a considerable majority in the Chamber of Deputies, and the nation revives to new hopes; while the descendants of those feudal lords who, in past times, aspired to subjugate both kings and people, may have learnt, that if they are heirs to the same pretensions, they are far from possessing the same powers.

If my pen has been faithful to my purpose, the sketch I have given you of the present situation of France will have led you to the conclusion that her prolonged sufferings have

taught her wisdom, and that, after all her weary wanderings, she has at length discovered the path of freedom, and will persevere in her progress. Let her be suffered henceforth, unimpeded, to pursue her way without foreign influence or interference. Some of the politicians of Europe may foresee greater prosperity for France than they may like, in the advantages of a representative government; others may wish, for reasons of state, that she were again subjected to her old despotism, or to another imperial irruption: but in the mean time the current of liberty will flow on, in spite of the stones they may throw to obstruct its passage. The combined *Ultras* of the whole earth, whatever alliance they may form, will not prevent France from being free. She now takes her place among constitutional governments, full of remembrances, and rich in hopes: she possesses, in the experience of her past calamities, an antidote against every species of despotism; and the lessons she has received will not be

lost upon a people of such quick perceptions. It is indeed easy to reproach the French with the crimes of their revolution; but who would dare to assign limits to the excesses into which a nation may be driven, when roused from a state of slavery as ancient as its origin, and stimulated by the long accumulated and traditional hatred of ages against oppression, it first feels the new ardor of independence throbbing in every vein? How difficult for such a nation, at such a moment, not to go astray and commit fatal errors, sometimes mistaking anarchy for freedom, and sometimes conquest for glory!

At present representative government is unfolding itself in France, and will soon rise to its full growth and vigour. The 20th of March, that terrible episode in French history, which has cost so much blood and treasure, has had great and useful results. It sealed the downfall of imperial tyranny, and showed France, in 1815, how far the aristocratical party would have led the King and the

people, if they had not been united in their resistance.

The nation, issuing triumphantly from that contest, feels a confidence in the stability of the new institutions, which derive additional force from that very confidence. Every eye is fixed on the Charter;—the French know that every chance of security is comprehended in that inviolable compact, that Bill of Rights, so dearly bought and so sacred. They will henceforth cherish freedom with moderation and wisdom, and will thus efface the bad example of their turbulent revolution.

The happiness promised by a monarch and sage of antiquity to those nations whose kings should be philosophers, and whose philosophers, kings; seems to be reserved for France. The enlightened mind of her sovereign is in sympathy with her rights, and he opposes with his royal authority whatever is treason against constitutional liberty.

There still survive, however, in the bosom of this nation two hostile powers—aristocracy

and fanaticism. The former has just received a rude shock, and is almost overwhelmed: the latter still lifts up her head. The Concordat, the anti-constitutional priests, the Jesuits, and above all, the missionaries, with their vagabond pilgrimages, produce an effect so much the more deplorable, as they seem to find some secret protection. There is no domination, however, which France is less disposed to endure than that of priests. Public opinion is, on that point, fixed and inflexible; it wishes to see the clergy confined within the precincts of their temples, or employed only in seeking to inspire in the faithful the pure sentiments of that piety whose "kingdom is not of this world." The nation desires to have a moral religion and civic priests.

Upon the whole, we may well admit the certainty, that the hopes of France will be accomplished, in the possession of a free constitution. The reproach that the French are incapable of liberty, is a calumny;—every

human being may aspire to the dignity of being free. Liberty is, like the moral sense, the attribute of our race. It is the source of whatever is great or noble in our nature; wherever man exists, it ought to be found; and he who is unworthy to possess that blessing has abdicated his rank in the creation.

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTER.

Defence of the French Protestants.

SINCE the preceding Letters were written, I have been informed, from good authority, that reports highly injurious to the French protestants have been circulated, and even published by some English travellers, on their return home. I am told that the name of the Reverend Mr. Raffles may be placed at the head of the list: whether this pre-eminence is due to the ability or the bitterness of his invective, I am ignorant, not having had an opportunity of reading these productions myself.

The strange blunders, and fantastic fictions, which some travellers have put into print concerning France, only excite a smile. Their reveries of French society and manners, and their exaggerated narratives of places and persons, have a whimsical air of romance, in

which truth is set boldly at defiance, but where deception leads to no serious consequences. Far different is the feeling awakened in the mind by erroneous accounts of the state of protestantism in France. On a subject so sacred to every sympathy of the heart, error assumes the character of calumny, and of calumny so much the more odious, as it comes in aid of oppression, and seems as if it would bruise those who are already broken.

I am told that the Reverend Mr. Raffles has arraigned the French protestants, in consequence of the observations he made respecting them in a journey from Paris to Geneva. Two roads lead from the one city to the other: on the northern road we find only the protestant church of Besançon; the congregation are neither numerous nor rich, but distinguished for their piety and zeal; they contribute with cheerful alacrity to the support of their minister, and have lately established, at their own expense, a school of mutual instruction.

On the southern road from Paris to Geneva, the only protestant church by which the traveller passes, is that of Lyons. It possesses two ministers and a school of mutual instruction. Placed beyond the limits of the persecution of the South, the protestants of Lyons received, with generous hospitality, numbers of their unhappy brethren, who had fled from assassination, without resource, without an asylum, and not knowing "where to lay their heads."

By making a small circuit on the southern road, the protestant church of Ferney is found, situate at the distance of thirty leagues from any other. Something like an atmosphere of toleration seems to encircle Ferney; and Voltaire appears in his most noble point of view on that spot, where his magical pen defended the protestant victim, and dragged his persecutors to light.

By the late treaty with the Allied Powers, Ferney lost part of its territory, which was ceded to Switzerland; and lost, at the same

time, its pastor, who resided in that part of its domain of which Switzerland took possession. Although deprived of their minister, the inhabitants of Ferney still continued to assemble every Sunday, to celebrate divine worship, performed by one of the Elders. When they stood in need of having their children baptized, or of any other religious rite, they sent a deputation to Geneva for a minister to come and officiate. At length the French government, in compliance with their earnest solicitation, have granted them a minister, by an ordinance dated the 18th of last May. When we thus follow the Reverend Mr. Raffles on his journey, we are at a loss to guess what flagrant offences of the protestants he had occasion to discover on the highway.

Unfortunate and devoted protestants of France! why did not these scrutinizing travellers turn their chariot-wheels more towards the south? They might then have seen the traces of your blood along their path; and,

as they passed by your desolate dwellings, have heard the wail of your widows, and of your fatherless children. Till now your calamities were softened by the persuasion of the sympathy of the English nation. You refused, as Frenchmen, her intervention, but you exulted in her applause:—and it is she who sends forth accusers against you—even while the palm of the martyr encircles your brows! For one word, one sign of renunciation of your faith, would have sheathed the daggers of your assassins; but no apostate was found in your ranks;—you shrunk not from death in testimony of the truth. Oh, if those who thank Heaven that “they are not as other men are,” were called upon to bear such trials as the protestants of France have borne, who among them shall dare to assert, that he would have fortitude to imitate the example they have left?

While the passing stranger discerns nothing in the conduct of the protestants but indifference to sacred things, how many proofs may

be brought forward of the increasing fervour of their piety! Never since the protestant churches were opened, was public worship so regularly attended at Paris, as it is at this period; and it is remarkable that, amidst the public burdens that have so heavily oppressed this country, the donations for the poor have augmented.

If we turn our eyes towards the provinces, we see, in all the great towns of France, the protestant churches liberally supported; and in small towns, and villages hitherto without places of public worship, churches are building by private subscription. At Landouzy in the department of L'Aisne, the protestants erected a new church in 1818. Such was their desire to see this edifice arise, that, having assembled together at Easter, every one spontaneously took part in the labour of bringing the materials for building, to the spot which they had marked. A few months after, a solemn dedication of the church took place, amidst a crowd of catholics, as well

as protestants, and the ceremony terminated by a general fête. At Orthes, the same zeal has lately been displayed in the construction of one of the finest churches in France, where two thousand persons can be placed. At Baigt, a village in the vicinity of Orthes, one rich individual paid two thirds of the expense of building a temple. Three new churches are erecting in the department of the Gard, the scene of protestant calamity. At Usez, a town of about four thousand inhabitants, two thousand of whom are protestants—Usez, where horrors took place that belong to history—more than one thousand protestants received the communion at Easter, in 1818. In the small village of Osse, but six leagues distant from Spain and the Inquisition, we find a congregation of protestants composed almost entirely of shepherds, who pass six months of the year amidst the snow of the Pyrennees. This pastoral village receives an annual visit from the minister of the nearest consistory, which is

fifteen leagues distant ; and for this visit they wait with eager expectation. Their rustic temple was overthrown at the revocation of the edict of Nantes, and they erected another in 1805, with their own hands, where one of the elders performs public worship every Sunday ; but they are now soliciting for a pastor, which they will probably obtain.

At Avignon, so long under popish dominion, and which the Pope, perhaps, fancies is still his own, we find a protestant congregation. Should Avignon ever be restored to his Holiness, he would no doubt be surprised to see that the heretical production of a protestant church had sprung up during the interregnum of his authority.

The visit of a minister to the small congregations of the South, which surround the consistorial churches, is hailed with universal joy. The minister alights at the house of one of the principal peasants, and when divine service is over, the whole congregation are invited to a fête given by the chief

proprietor of the place. The fatted-calf is killed, and the board is loaded with the choicest produce of the farm. On those occasions the peasants walk sometimes ten leagues under the rays of a burning sun, winding along the banks of the Tarn, and and the Garonne, to join what they call in their *patois*, *la societat*. In many of these villages, there are now religious meetings in the evenings, where the Scriptures are read, and psalms are sung, instead of the tales of spectres, and the *patois* songs, that used to shorten the hours of the *veillée*, or wake, during the winter. At Milhars, in the department of the Herault, a friend of mine was astonished, on revisiting lately his native spot, to find the inhabitants employed in singing hymns. A religious periodical journal, intitled “*Les Archives du Christianisme*,” is now published at Paris. The peasants of the South often assemble to listen to the Evangelical truths contained in this journal; and the schools of mutual instruction have given

so general an impulsion to learning, that readers are no longer scarce. The establishment of the Bible Society of Paris has been followed by those of Bordeaux, Nantes, Montpellier, Nismes, and other great towns; and the Scriptures are already widely circulated. A new Theological Faculty is going to be formed at Strasbourg.

The facts I have related are, I trust, calculated to appease the wrath and indignation of those travellers who have come to spy the nakedness of the land, but who will surely, in a true Christian spirit, rejoice to find that there is less sin than they imagined. But a further vindication must be attempted: the French protestants are arraigned for the crime of profanation of the Sabbath day. It is perhaps little philosophical not to mark the distinction between voluntary deviations from duty, and practices which seem to be connected, as it were, with the geography of a country, and to depend, in some sort, on the natural temper and disposition of its inhabi-

tants ; practices by which, if offence is given, none at least is intended. The general custom throughout France is to celebrate Sunday not as a day of rigid seclusion, but of liberty and gladness, and the protestants are French ; the same usages therefore prevail amongst them as among the catholics. The religious duties of the morning performed, the evening is given to amusements. For myself, brought up in all the severity of dissenting principles, every impression of childhood, every remembered habit of early life, impel me to reverence the strict observance of the Sabbath. To me the calm stilness of that day of repose in England would be delight. But how many protestants do I know, who shrink not on that day from the sound of “ the viol and the harp,” who even contend that the dance upon the green is more harmless than that listless inaction, which is proverbially said to be the parent of vice ; and who at the same time never omitted an important duty. Ah ! in that balance of moral good and evil, in

which human actions will one day be weighed, may not the French protestants, if the sacrilege of the dance should sink one scale, place their sufferings, their resignation, and their devotedness in the other? Who can tell if “the Recording Angel” when he inscribes the levity of Sunday, may not “drop a tear upon the word.”

The security of the protestants of the South was lately again disturbed, during a few days. No sooner did the tidings of the too famous motion against the law of elections reach Nismes, than the *Ultra*-party seized a pretext for new disturbances. An actor from Paris appeared at the theatre of Nismes, which was unusually crowded. The representation was frequently interrupted by loud and repeated clamours and menaces against the protestants, who were assailed, in returning to their houses, by men armed with pikes, and having for one of their leaders the wretch Tres Tallion, still thirsting for protestant blood.

The Prefect of the Gard was then at Paris ;

and the Prefect *ad interim*, and the Mayor of Nismes, acted with that weakness which never fails to encourage the evil it means to repress. During several successive evenings the boulevards of Nismes were crowded with some thousands of people. On one side were a great number of the dismissed national guard of 1815, which still counted among its ranks many of the ringleaders of that disastrous period; on the other side of the boulevards were the protestants, now determined not to be massacred without resistance. They had borne enough—they had endured the persecution of 1815, without calling to their aid the protestant population of the neighbouring mountains of the Cevennes, that bold and valiant race which still preserves its antique courage, and the tradition of its successful resistance to the *Grand Monarque*. But an appeal to the Cevennes, at the time when the allied armies occupied France, might have produced fatal scenes of foreign and domestic devastation. The situation of the

country was now changed ; no patriotic duty forbade the defence of life, the protestants were prepared, and the inhabitants of the Cevennes were in arms. They sent emissaries to Nismes, to obtain exact information of what was passing. They found the two parties in presence of each other. One of these messengers walked up boldly to that part of the boulevard where Tres Tallion and his bands were assembled, and where cries of imprecation against the protestants were uttered. A crowd gathered round him ; but, without the least symptom of dismay, he told them that this time, if the laws did not protect the protestants, they would find other protectors. He declared that if one drop of protestant blood were spilt, it would be woe to the catholics of Nismes—that the “ *mountains*,” to use his figurative language, would descend, and he warned them to beware of that moment !

Happily, the peasants of the Cevennes were not compelled to fulfil their menace ; troops

arrived from Montpellier, the Prefect hastened from Paris, Tres Tallion fled from the Gard, the charter triumphed in the Chamber of Deputies, and the protestants were in safety at Nismes.

Let me conclude, by repeating that no doubt can justly be entertained of the devotedness of the protestants of France to their religious duties, and their steadfast attachment to that faith which persecution has served to endear. I may add that, whatever opinions may have gone forth against the French protestants in England, they are the objects of general respect in France. Independently of that philosophical respect which mankind grant to a belief founded on examination, other powerful sentiments concur to give the protestants favour in public opinion in this country. While the protestants were persecuted, the French were enslaved; and despotism and intolerance are always found in the same page of French history. When the nation accomplished that

modern political reformation, called the Revolution; in the code of public liberty, that of the protestants found its place. Every liberal catholic feels that the liberty of worship is a part of French liberty that belongs to all; and that whenever the rights of the protestants are disowned, every other right is shaken to its foundation. France has received that unfortunate portion of her children to her bosom; she feels a warm solicitude for those new-comers, to whom she has given welcome, and desires to wipe away the stain of their long persecution. She knows that national and protestant liberty, which have one common origin, are the natural guardians of each other, and are destined to perish or live together.

THE END.

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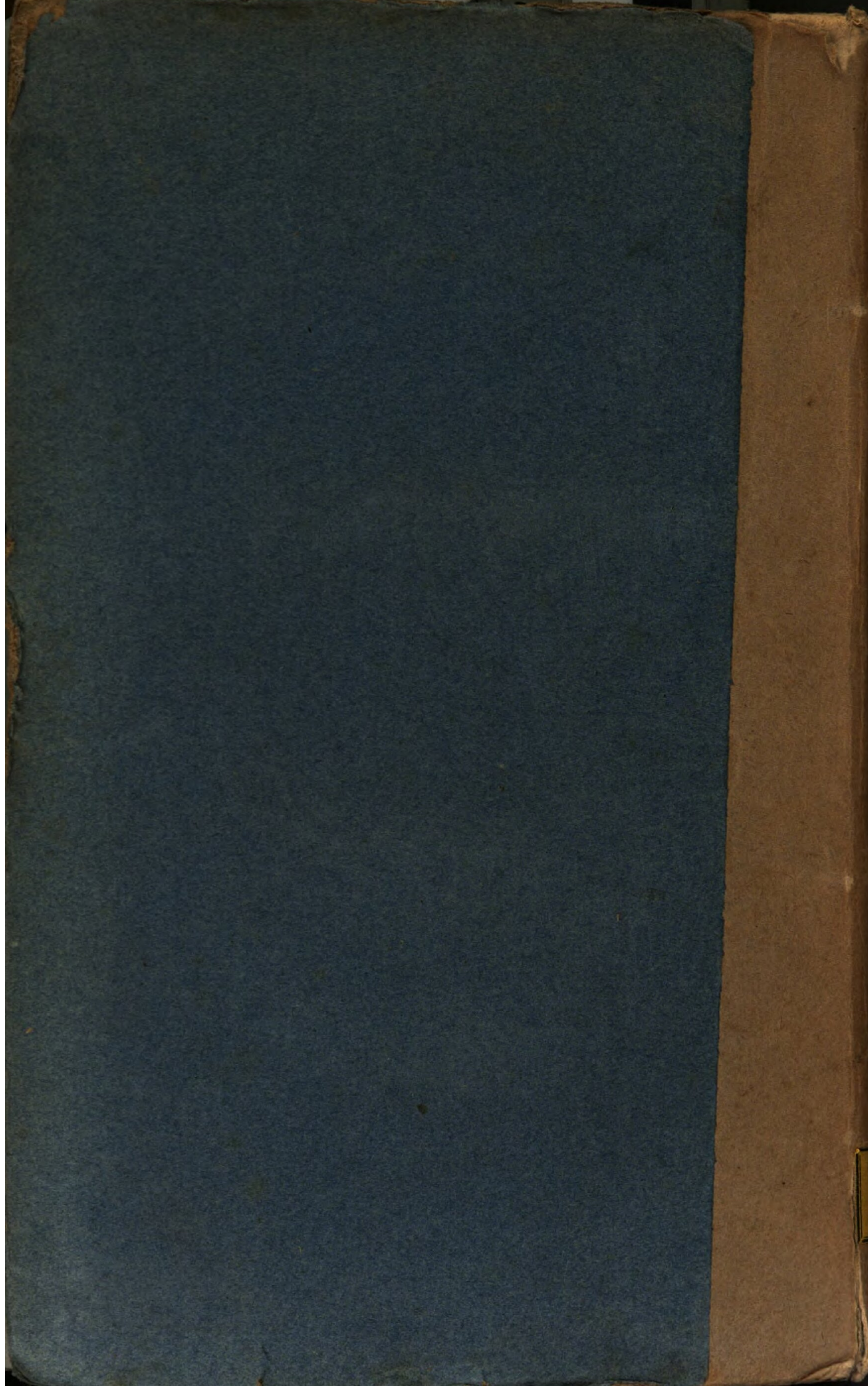
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